



**Ourselves  
When Young**  

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**H. T. SHERINGHAM**



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OURSELVES WHEN YOUNG



# OURSELVES WHEN YOUNG

BY  
*Hugh T. Inge*  
H. T. SHERINGHAM

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OURSELVES WHEN YOUNG



# OURSELVES WHEN YOUNG

## I

### A QUESTION FOR FATHER CHRISTMAS

*I*TEM, a pink china rabbit minus one ear. Guy has weighed in with his list complacently. Nemesis, in the shape of Father Christmas's displeasure, is not going to overtake him to any overwhelming extent if a fair-seeming record can evade it. You are to know that this year Father Christmas is in the movement. He controls. He rations. He tears off half-coupons and whole coupons according as our misdeeds have been minor or major. The ear of a pink china rabbit signifies a half-coupon, since we did not mean to break; we sought only the gratification of the sense of touch, the same being unlawful but not so bad as the will-to-destroy. That, as we know quite well, is a not-English desire, a Hunnish

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propensity in fact. And when possible we try to remember that we know it.

The trouble is that we cannot all remember all the time, and so this sorrowful business of casting up accounts against Father Christmas's coming, which, as some allege, is to be by aeroplane and so through the skylight. The question is how the ration books stand in face of a number of sad memorials which surround us.

Guy has acknowledged the rabbit's ear, but beyond that his conscience is obviously whole. "I expect I shan't get a coat for my Teddy," he meditates, assigning to the half-coupon its equivalent in present-value. "Isn't it lucky you made me that other coat for him?" Fond maternity sometimes fails in prescience, or else Penalty of the limping foot lags behind out of sight. But it was absolutely essential for Teddy to have some fresh covering. He is pre-war and has taken life hardly. There are anatomical pictures showing *Homo sapiens* without his skin. Teddy is like that.

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“Penny won’t have many coupons left,” says Guy, turning once more to the main enquiry. “I haven’t bwoke nothing,” Penelope responds firmly. “What about the pig book what you threw into the fire?” On this matter her mind is quite easy. “It wasn’t *bwoke*, and anyhow it was only a *book*.” This is accepted as sound reasoning, but the pig-book is apparently only the end link in a chain. There are other matters to be accounted for, such as the little table, the lid of the big toy-box, the plate which had “Baby” on it in brave blue letters, the doll which is called Jane even without a head (it is the head that is in question), the green cat which purported to be tin but dissolved into atoms when it jumped from shelf to floor, Herbert who formerly had two arms, two legs, and four faces, but now has nothing but his unconquerable soul—all these and more are to be dragged to light, discussed, and “blamed onto” the proper party. Otherwise who shall say what dire injustice may not be done to people’s ration books?

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Penelope maintains her point of view stoutly. She is not even to be manœuvred into a false position by subtlety. It is doubtless true that very young persons may be excused lapses which would have caused it to go hardly with their elders, but that is an academic issue, "juist havers," what you will. "I'm not a little girl, I'm *free*, and—and Poggin done it." The ingenuity of the female is much to be admired. Here is a raft fit to navigate a sea of troubles. For Poggin has nothing to say for himself. He is inarticulate. He goes by default. The very breadth of his smile on the round world as he safely achieves a journey from the armchair to the side of the pen, a full yard, betokens impenitence. But see how Fate trips up the evil-doer. That wailing is not, as some might think, the result of thwarted ambition to perambulate from pen to table or of a head soundly bumped on the floor, but of a sudden consciousness of a sinful past and a couponless future. Let him wail.

And so a comprehensive list is composed



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that Poggin may fully purge his offences. This he tore asunder, that he rent in twain. On the one he sat, over the other he rolled. Mark how he placed his massive though uncertain foot on the "hair-slide" which was wont to restrain the handful of tow which Penelope calls her hair. Where is that hair-slide now? Behold that tattered piece of wall, and hear how Poggin pulled off the paper in wanton strips. Observe yon blind-cord torn from its socket while, as is averred, the righteous slept their noon sleep. Put your head out of the window—you can get one eye just over the lower bar by nice adjustment—and survey the conservatory roof, how one pane is star-spangled, and one all holes and splinters. Who but Poggin should have cast Mr. Equal out so that he jumped, and slid, and jumped, and finally crashed through, coming to rest all standing on the stone floor like the lead-balanced wooden image that he is?

By this time Poggin has been restored to an

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upright position and comforted and he once more beams on his surroundings. It is clear that the question of coupons does not weigh with him very heavily. And anyway it is not *proved* that he committed all the deeds of violence imputed to him. It is possible that he may have eaten the missing portion of Penelope's left red shoe. He has certainly been found in the act of swallowing a not-English stamp, one of the gems of Guy's collection. The right eye of Ursus Major has perhaps gone the way of other small missing things—it is fortunate that Poggin has a good digestion.

But, as one sensible person to another, will Guy assert that Poggin can have had a hand, in, for instance, the unfortunate affair of the mangle? Will Penelope lay her hand on her heart and testify that Poggin, as an example, kicked the paint off the dining-room door what time he clamoured for admission and could not cope with the handle? These be searching questions, for we all know quite well that such

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doings are beyond Poggin's capacity. But *somebody* must have been responsible for them. At this point Guy looks up with his inspired expression. Another way out has been most fortunately indicated. All these later things must be put on the schedule to be entitled "What Somebody broke." Who Somebody may be we cannot tell. There are mysteries that are not to be explored.

Unhappily the inexorable Memory which rules us all and tells us things for our good rakes together another scheduleful of items. Eyes grow round at the thought of the busy season we have had. The handle of the bureau, the round bowl which had snails and sticklebacks in it, the little brass man who used to go shooting daily on the dining-room bookcase till his gun was removed, the yard-measure that shut itself up with a suddenness which gave you delightful jumps till it received some hurt to its inside—here are some of them, awaiting the favour of your kind attention. Guy is equal to the occasion, however. He

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meets it with a bold antithesis. This schedule contains, of course, the things "What Nobody broke." It is apparent that Nobody (usually dignified with the prefix of Mr.) in a manner of speaking cuts both ways. He has come in very usefully in the past as a sort of scavenger, removing, for instance, a box containing a toad and two worms from the store-room, and otherwise undoing the achievements of hard-working people. We must all, old and young alike, have a case of Mr. Nobody.

And even now the record of the late crowded months is not quite complete. At this point, however, Penelope intervenes with what in anything a few sizes larger might well be considered brusqueness. Perhaps there may have been other things, but if there have been they are "Things what bwoke theirselves."

So now we have the enquiry finished. But how Father Christmas will adjust it all it is hard to say.

## II

### THE FAIRIES

PENELOPE has seen a dead fairy. At least Penelope *says* she has seen a dead fairy. It is a dank November day, with mists blanketing the river valley and a dropping of constant tears from the now leafless trees, quite the sort of day on which you might expect to find some poor little fairy who has passed away after a severe attack of what we call "interender." That is, of course, provided that fairies get the influenza, and having got it are o'erswayed by sad mortality. As to that we are bound to have our doubts. Guy contests the idea: "Fairies *don't* die. I expect it was a mouse you saw. Or a frog."

We do not get much more light on the incident because Penelope is not concerned to uphold her statement. She will not even say where she saw it, much less what it looked like.

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That is nearly always the way with really interesting things; you get a hint, an impression, and no more. If we believed that Penelope believed that it was a right fairy, we should ask her why she did not pick it up and bring it home. There should have been worthy obsequies, and the finest thing obtainable about the garden for a headstone. But we do not believe. We are only just so much impressed by her statement as to feel unsettled in our minds. Which causes us, on further consideration, to be annoyed with Penelope, who has no right to preach this atheism.

Let us, to restore the balance of things, narrate the history of Penelope's great discomfiture at the hands of the little folk, which befell during the past summer, she being then two years and nine months and therefore fully able to appreciate the significance of what happened. We had gone for a Big Picnic. There are picnics of two sizes, and the little, though delightful, are not so wonderful as the big. The water is only up to your ankles,

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and it has nothing in it bigger than stickle-backs. Besides it is not really in distant country. Cross the lawn and one field and there you are.

But for the big picnic you go all the way along the water-walk, and have to pass the field where the three bulls are, a thrilling business in itself (although they be young as it is said, bulls are bulls, and we are not very old ourselves). After that there is a stile to be got over, baskets and all, and then there is the long flight of wooden steps up to the road, which rises rapidly because it crosses the railway. With a bit of luck a train may go under the bridge just at the right time. This adds variety to the afternoon. If you cannot get lifted up so as to look over, you have to poke your head through the fence at the side. Poggin, by the way, usually meets the procession at this point taking carriage exercise. His vehicle cannot go over stiles and up steps.

Down hill from the railway bridge you would come to the river bridge in a few yards,

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but instead you turn sharp to the right and make for the mill, a wondrous place which has grown up in a night, so to speak. Only last year it was a ruin, with great holes in the floor and roaring water to be seen through. An army of men came with bricks and mortar and hammers and shouts and mended the mill. Now it has grown into a big timber yard into which tall trees come and out of which long planks go. The trains come and fetch them away to the war.

But we do not stop long to look at these things. We go along in front of the mill and then cross a field to the picnic tree, which is the hugest willow that ever was and had a wild bees' nest in it last year. The nest is not there this year, but it is always worth while looking about to see if they dropped any honey. You never know your luck. Guy found a leaf with something on it that was distinctly sticky, and which would almost certainly have been honey if it had been sweet.

The chief thing about the picnic tree, how-



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ever, is that it is at the edge of the river, just where the big weirpool shallows and runs over gravel banks to the weedy deeps below. With the sun, and the foam, the noise of the water and the nice cool weedy smell mixed with the wild thyme and the water mint, this is the place of all others for a July afternoon. The programme of a big picnic is as follows.

(1) We put on our bathing dresses and we go boldly into the sparkling water up to our waists. There is a pool thoughtfully provided for this purpose by a side channel of the river which has worn a way close under our own bank.

The reasons why we do not go in above our waists are two. The first, that we "do not mind the deepness but we don't like the coldness." The second, that we have a care since the day when Penelope tripped over a stone and lay prone on the bottom looking like an agitated red fish. That was an experience to make one think. Some day, of course, we shall give our minds to it and master the art of

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swimming, but there is no time for that just at present.

(2) We dry ourselves and resume our ordinary costumes.

(3) We take our collation, which is disposed on a seemly white cloth, round which the company is grouped on rugs. Poggin has a rug to himself in the middle distance, his table manners being hearty rather than distinguished.

We eat bread and butter, bread and jam, cake, raspberries. We drink according to our humour, tea out of a thermos flask, milk out of bottles. We eat and drink all that is provided and then

(4) We turn to the business of amusing ourselves. This varies with inclination. There may be paddling, honey-hunting, stick-sailing, pebble-throwing, or what not.

On the occasion under review the programme was a visit to the island, a noble tract of sand and shingle set beyond the bathing stream and on the hither side of the main

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stream which races along under the distant willow roots, and out of which big silver fishes jump at dancing gnats. The island is obviously full of treasures. There are little pools, and things which gleam in the sun. Who shall say that the water fairies do not come and dance there when the moon is full and the golden gravel is turned to silver? It is a very likely place indeed for such a thing.

To get to the island the interposition of a fairly tall Providence is necessary, because of the deepness. Human nature draws a line at the waist, as before observed. But with help active people can be swung across, for the distance is not great. Well, we were awaiting the fulfilment of the programme, when Penelope most unwisely sat down by the bubbling water and placed one shoe in it. She was solemnly warned that if she was such a naughty little girl while the baskets were being packed the water fairies would be very cross indeed.

Penelope dared the fairies to come on. She

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said "Pooh" to the fairies. And she placed the other shoe in the bubbling water.

Thereupon, as though some wizard had smitten with his staff (and indeed there was a mysterious figure to be seen by the floodgates at the head of the weirpool, had anyone been looking), there was a mighty roaring of water, and the river began to mount up and up. Faster and faster it came and the island gradually vanished before our ever-widening eyes. Presently it was clean gone, and not a trace of it could be seen in all that seething waste.

We went home sadder but wiser, and have had a wholesome respect for the opinion of the water fairies ever since.

Besides Penelope's alleged fairy the only other manifestation of the kind for which we can vouch was seen by Albert. He was cleaning boots at the time and whistling the Brabançonne (Albert came over from Belgium at the beginning of the war with his family, and daily expects to return), when he

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happened to look up, as he tells Guy, and saw a pale blue fairy emerging from the kitchen chimney. The fairy became mistier and mistier and vanished (like smoke, Albert says), and nothing came of the incident, but it was doubtless one of the tribe that does things in the chimneys.

These are fire-fairies, and they are responsible for the glow of red-hot coals, and especially for the little tongues of green or blue flame which take our eye so mightily. If you repent properly, they will not only forgive you, but even make things better than before sometimes. When Penelope threw Poggin's fluffy duck into the fire the fairies returned it "as new" on the morrow, and it was particularly noticeable that they had given it a serviceable pair of yellow feet. But of course there had been an interlude of sackcloth and ashes when we ate our bread with tears.

If you do not repent, or if you wear a proud look and a high stomach, the fire-fairies can punish. One of them lives in the bright part

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of the tall coffee-pot and burns you smartly if you lay a hand on the dazzling surface. We learnt that ages ago. When we had very few words indeed we were always able to apostrophise the coffee-pot. We said "Hot!" to it in tones of reverent awe.

How far you can propitiate the fire-fairies in advance is not known. Guy was found with his right arm and shoulder quite black the other day. It appeared that he had been making an offering up the night-nursery chimney. He refused to say what it was all about, but it must have been pretty serious because the thing offered was nothing less than Poggin's outworn tooth-brush. We had all had our eyes expectantly on that for some time. It had a clear amber handle like jujubes. So you can understand that it would not be sacrificed lightly. We conjecture that it was hush-money.

None of the house fairies, which are the most important kind, can bring large parcels, so it is no good expecting them to. Could they if

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they all pushed together? No. The proper time for large parcels is when Father Christmas goes his rounds, or on a birthday when the postman or the carrier attends to the matter. If you find some trace of the fairies on your pillow or tied to the bars of your cot on an ordinary morning it won't be bigger than two chocolates, or a doll's shoes, or something like that. They are rather good at finding and bringing a foreign stamp from time to time. Altogether they are decidedly useful in a quiet unostentatious way, and it is well worth while being on good terms with them.

Guy thought he saw one once, but afterwards he thought it must have been a moonbeam that came in through a crack in the curtains. That was when a careful search in the morning failed to produce even so much as a small chocolate drop. It is a well-known fact that though the fairies' hands are small they are never empty like that.

The air fairies live with Mother Goose. Then there are some wood fairies in the

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kitchen garden, probably in the top of the nut trees where it is thick and leafy and you can't see. At night they go into the apple trees and paint the apples red. Their paint pots are very tiny, which is why they can hardly ever paint an apple all over. This year, as we all know, there has been no red paint obtainable because of the war. So there haven't been any red apples either, or strawberries. The fairies had so little to do that one night they went to the onion bed and knocked all the onions over on their sides, a very funny thing to see afterwards. And another night they took away all the green gages. Albert thinks so, anyhow, and he should know. Perhaps the greengages wouldn't have been any good because they were suffering from what is called "Fingerblight." All the fruit had it, but not the cabbages.

Penelope went out one day to see the Fingerblight which she'd heard so much about. (It was the same spirit of enquiry which once led Guy to demand a visit to the whooping



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cough, then much discussed). But she came in disappointed. She had seen nothing but Albert weeding.

The more we think of it the more convinced we are that Penelope's dead fairy is a pure invention. She has "had it in for" the fairies ever since the Big Picnic, and she would *like* to see one dead. A water one, anyhow. That's what it is. It is not thought that water fairies bring any presents. They only splash rain against the window.

### III

#### NIGHT WATCHES

*In winter I get up at night  
And dress by yellow candle-light.  
In summer, quite the other way,  
I have to go to bed by day.*

*I have to go to bed and see  
The birds still hopping on the tree,  
Or hear the grown-up people's feet  
Still going past me in the street.*

*And does it not seem hard to you,  
When all the sky is clear and blue,  
And I should like so much to play,  
To have to go to bed by day?*

THE name of this poem is not really that which Stevenson gave to it, it is "Ode to the new Act." For it was the new Act which aggravated the situation so much that bedtime may be said almost to come in the morning. The new Act came about just when Guy was old enough to appreciate this inconven-

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ience, and he was sufficiently impressed by it to consent to a first lesson in English literature. His rendering lacked something in articulation. His birds, for instance, were always "hopping top on tree," and he ignored all such trifles as "the" or "and." But there was no doubt as to the heartiness with which he endorsed the note of complaint which runs through the poem.

In due course Penelope joined her voice to Guy's, and now we have quite a deputation, for Poggin is just as convinced as anybody. He expresses his sentiments at 5 p.m., Penelope follows with a few well-chosen words at 5.30, and Guy addresses the Chair eloquently at six.

The Chair, after the manner of Chairs, is sympathetic but non-committal. While it is greatly to be regretted that there is no immediate prospect of anything being done to remedy what is undoubtedly a difficult and in some ways perhaps a grievous state of affairs, the Chair is not without hope, certainly not with-

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out hope, that at some future date it may be possible to recommend some relaxation in the hours of—ahem!—closing. The speakers who have so cogently—if the Chair may be permitted to say so—put forward what is admittedly a point of view shared by no small part of the people of these Islands, can rest assured that they have been heard with the utmost sympathy. They may be sure. . . . And so on.

But it never makes any difference of course. When did deputations ever alter the course of events? No one knows better than Chairs that the surest way to draw the poison out of a movement is to invite it to surrender its fangs at a deputation. Everybody is reported in the Press. The leader writers spread themselves in such phrases as “It is time that action was taken” or “the Public will not tolerate any further delay,” and on the third day the movement is dead. New movements may follow as successive waves come on the heels of the first, but like the waves they fall to

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pieces with a little noise and bubblement. Chairs know their business.

Great reforms cannot come about with strict observance of tradition, set programmes, and votes of thanks. You must spring a surprise on the people. Encourage the public to make its plans for the Christmas holiday, prepare special trains in abundance, get the cabs piled high with luggage, and have the engines whistling with impatience in the stations—then begin a railway strike. You will surprise everyone very much and reforms are sure to follow. Either you will reform the public or the public will turn to and reform you—for that also is possible. You have to risk something.

It was presumably in this spirit that Poggin began to champion the general cause by surprise tactics. Precisely at 11.15 p.m. on Bulgaria night he went berserk. He rose in his cot, shouted defiance, sang wordless pæans, brandished his fists, and even leaped inches into the air, till the laws of gravity asserted themselves and he fell on his head.

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Nothing daunted, he reared himself up again and began afresh. The clamour of it all attracted attention and soon he was the centre of an interested audience, part of which had put away sleep in order to admire, or laugh, as the case might be.

This was all very well as an isolated celebration, but when Poggin repeated the performance on the next night, on the night after, every night for a week, it was felt that his zeal outran the merits of his case. The Public, or so much of it as was affected, turned to and quelled this Bolshevist outbreak. The method was simple. The night-light, which had hitherto tempered the darkness with its mild radiance, was quenched. Poggin, it is reported, woke himself up at the scheduled hour on the eighth night, but was without any means of verifying the position or of taking his bearings. He murmured awhile in a dissatisfied manner and so fell on sleep. Thus another nuisance was abated.

Oblivion, says the good Sir Thomas, is not

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to be hired, and small things will sometimes interfere with that soft dropping away into forgetfulness and dreams which comes when the Dustman has touched tired eyes. For instance, if one's stable companions of the moment have been mislaid or forgotten, it is quite impossible to clear the mind of mundane things. The order of events should be:—

1. Disposal of effects within handy reach, that is to say, Teddy's head on the right corner of the pillow, and the latest thing in cigarette cards or stamps under the pillow on the left side.

2. Prayers, which can then be offered without reservations.

3. Tucking-up, and immediately after sleep.

Sometimes, by malign accident, things are disarranged. Thus on a recent evening Penelope, thinking that all was well, had said her prayers with unction, and was tucked-up and done for, when she suddenly realised that all was very far from well. The new fluffy duck

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was not in its proper place. "I want my duck," she complained, untucking herself with an indignant heave of the shoulder.

An untucked child tries the temper. "If you say another word," came the firm reply, "after your prayers too, you shan't have your duck." Then was Penelope placed in a hideous dilemma. Search was to be made for the duck in the day nursery, but as a matter of fact it was not there. The inevitable result would be a report that it could not be found and therefore must be foregone. If, on the other hand, information were to be given as to where the creature really was, that would almost certainly constitute "another word." And so Penelope stood to lose either way. Besides too much insistence might recall the fact that it was not her duck at all, but Poggin's, which had merely been adopted. She struggled with an impulse to speak for a little while, with a piteous opening and shutting of the mouth, and at last out it came all in a rush—"Duck's-in-here." Perhaps a very short



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quick exclamation of that sort would pass as a cough or a sneeze and yet do what was wanted. For the satisfaction of the compassionate it may be recorded that Penelope got the duck.

Occasionally something that is not wholly material upsets the serenity of an evening. From the night-nursery came certain noises that heralded the storm, and presently the storm itself broke in a great volume of sound. Both Guy and Penelope were demonstrating some serious trouble to the very limit of their capacity. A rescue party was organised immediately, for it was plain that something out of the common had occurred. The door was opened, but everything seemed much as usual except for the sighs and sobs from the two cots. "What on earth is the matter?" was the natural enquiry. "The curtain is crooked," complained Guy in an agonised voice. "We can't go to sleep with it crooked."

The remedy was soon applied, but to this day it remains a mystery why the fact that a piece of drapery was not quite truly aligned

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should have had such an effect on people to whom disorder is, in the ordinary run of things, a great part of enjoyment. Perhaps it is an earnest of better times in store.

As a rule the night has no particular terrors for any of us, since it is peopled with fairies and angels of beneficent disposition, and we have no acquaintance with the Darker Powers as yet—long may they be kept from troubling us. Still there are occasionally sudden wakings and vague apprehensions. One night the voice of Guy came echoing through the half-open door and down the passage. "We're frightened," it announced in a matter-of-fact sort of way. The statement was repeated indignantly. Then there was silence for a while.

Presently Guy sought confirmation. "Penny," he called, "we're frightened, aren't we?" No answer. "Penny, wake up! Aren't we frightened? Wake up, Penny! Aren't we?" A very sleepy voice—it was easy to imagine one eye half-opened—assented

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to the proposition, "Ye-es, Guy." The upshot of this scene was two small figures in red dressing-gowns seated on a sofa, and a sound of munched biscuits, with four very round eyes excitedly appreciating the adventure of being abroad in the Middle of the Night.

Happily this sort of adventure cannot grow into a habit, for sleep makes heavy demands on us as a rule. We cannot even keep awake to watch for fairies when gifts are in prospect.

But we make up for it in the morning, and the fairies can hardly have got off the premises before we are embarked on the business of another day. Often we prevent Chanticleer himself with our affairs and in the wee hours this sort of thing may be heard:

"You get off my bed and I'll give you your doll."

"You give me my doll and I'll get off your bed."

To have to adjudicate in a deadlock of this sort at 5 a.m. is hard on the Powers that Wish they Weren't.

## IV

### CONCERNING ANOTHER LITTLE GIRL

FROM time to time Another Little Girl crops up in our annals, sometimes as an illustration, sometimes as a warning, less often—by reason of the paucity of evidence—as an example. You cannot do much in the way of pattern-making with a little girl who at the age of three left the house in a nice woolly muffler, provided by kind parents as a protection against the cold, and without saying a word to anyone tied it round a large stone and cast it into the Norfolk Broads, where for all that is known it remains to this day. There is another muffler somewhere in the North Sea, and a third inside a certain park wall—provided that mufflers last a good long time in difficult conditions. Anyhow it needed three good mufflers to convince the Powers that Used to Be of Another Little

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Girl's impatience with more than a modicum of raiment.

Obviously it would not do to tell Penelope things of this sort. Mufflers have gone out of fashion, but there are other complications which might suggest rivalry. What man has done, man, and still more woman, can do. The business of "fielding" shoes, jerseys, and other things which are hurtling towards the well-filled bath becomes, it is asserted, almost monotonous on some evenings. We have no North Sea near us, so we should not have to patrol that, but there is a river of sufficient volume to absorb the whole of Penelope's wardrobe without leaving a trace.

It is to be noted that the young female is not always provided with the clothes instinct as one might suppose. Both Penelope and the Other Little Girl of history are strangely indifferent to clothes at certain times. A frock is chiefly esteemed because the amplitude of its skirt (we do not care for the modern ballet-dancer's mode) enables the conveyance

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of a bigger load of gravel, stones, mud, or what not than could be managed in the hands. Sleeves are found most becoming when they are used as a protection to the arms during dabbling. There is also perhaps a certain devil-may-carefulness about thoroughly soaked raiment which makes its appeal.

It is within memory how the Other Little Girl at a somewhat later period (she was then turned four) had laid plans for bathing in the aforesaid North Sea on the occasion of a family picnic. Owing, however, to grey skies and a shrewd air on the appointed day, the Powers that Used to Be put their foot down and said No. And when they were all busy with the hamper and the tea-kettle the Other Little Girl stepped briskly off into the waves with all her clothes on.

Later, when retrieved and admonished, she was led off for punishment to the only building that was to be found on all that lonely coast, the lighthouse. Therein while her clothes were drying she should sit tea-less and medi-

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tate on her sins what time other well-behaved folks feasted among the dunes. It is sad how plans miscarry. An hour or more afterwards the criminal was sought out. Robed in a blanket, she was seated in the chair of honour consuming her eighth slice of bread and home-made strawberry jam, and conversing affably with a misguided lighthouse keeper's wife. Never had an afternoon been more happily spent. Hardly anyone in the world has eaten eight slices of bread and strawberry jam in a lighthouse.

Penelope, of course, knows nothing about this incident.

The other morning after breakfast the world was startled by the appearance of Penelope very debonair in *négligé*. One not more than adequate garment completed her attire, though when last seen she had a full complement of shoes and other things. The explanation seemed to be that she had found herself with a few minutes to spare. The irony of the situation was that though

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Penelope can undress herself, she is not yet able to reverse the process. So someone's work was to do all over again.

This was in December and Penelope knows nothing of the occasion when the Other Little Girl found a primrose and a gleam of sun and said to herself, "It is spring." Penelope has never heard how the Other Little Girl tore off her hat and threw it into the mud, caused her coat to follow the hat, and then added so much of her clothing as could readily be removed to the heap. Penelope's mental vision holds no picture of the Other Little Girl dancing a springtime dance among the ruins, with her eye on the primrose, and the sunbeam on her curly hair.

Penelope has been told nothing of this. But we wonder what she will be doing by the Spring if December has so much effect. What says the poet?

Come, fill the Cup, and in the Fire of Spring  
The Winter-garment of Repentance fling.

Fire is even better than mud, perhaps.



## CONCERNING ANOTHER LITTLE GIRL

Little girls, you may say, are all very much alike, but that we have found not to be the case. Take, for instance, Camilla, who, with her faithful doll Circe, paid us a visit in the summer. Camilla was a small exquisite. She would dress for nursery tea if she had her way. A spot of mud on her frock would fill her with consternation, and nothing would do but a complete change (Circe, it must be owned, was less particular). It was unfortunate that the ploy of the period was "being at the seaside." To do this properly you have to bring your sea with you. The shore is already provided in a sand heap between the cauliflower tree and the field. The sea is conveyed in an old baitcan, a broken vegetable dish, and other receptacles. It is generally mixed with its shore and people soon become brown all over. Camilla got used to being brown in time, but she never really recovered her self-respect till she appeared in her velvet dress in the afternoon, and was able to show her young friends what *could* be done if one tried.

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Youth, by the way, is a time of rather nice distinctions, but if you make the most of them a good deal can be established. Guy was inclined occasionally to overlook the three months that separated himself and the lady. "Well," she would say, "you're only four. *I* shall be six next birthday." He knew that there was a retort somewhere, but he could never find it in words. The best he could do was to try and make Camilla browner than before. After a while even this lost much of its sting, while Guy still remained four and Camilla never varied from being six next birthday. The position is really unassailable for a long time to come if properly maintained.

Camilla's velvet dress is said to have precipitated a grave misfortune. There was a tea-party at the Mill and brave doings were projected among the ducks and chickens, about, perhaps in, the water, with possibly a cruise in the boat. Everybody was, of course, much excited about the prospect. And then Camilla came out with a most surprising peti-

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tion to Providence. "Oh, I *do* hope it will be cold and wet," she sighed, "then I can wear my velvet dress." And it *was* cold and wet, so of course Camilla was credited with having ill-wished the function. There was a good deal of feeling about it. People refused to admire Camilla, and even told her that the velvet dress was "simply howwid." Altogether an unfortunate affair.

Neither Penelope nor the Other Little Girl would have uttered Camilla's petition for Camilla's reason. A desire for a cold wet day—that would be conceivable. But the motive would have been mud or puddles, or both. The velvet dress, if considered at all, would have been merely accessory to the mud or puddles, by whose aid it could be made to look thoroughly foolish. So little girls are not all very much alike.

The friendly warning has its place in our economy, as in that of all well-ordered communities. Used with discretion it is at times effective in averting catastrophes. Penelope,

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for instance, is at this moment very unsettled in her mind about the wisdom of sucking one's thumb, whereas not so very long ago she had no doubt that it was the proper as well as the pleasant thing to do. The change is not wholly due to "bit of aloe," which can be thrown out of windows (and is), but in large part to the lesson inculcated by that excellent work, *Shock-Headed Peter*, which is explicit on the subject of thumb-sucking. Intensive study of the misadventures of Conrad has impressed all our minds.

Only the other day Penelope entered by the garden door in haste and agitation proclaiming that "nobody hadn't done nothing," and she straightway vanished into some very obscure corner. The reason for this was not immediately apparent, but presently came the sound of chanting from the gravel outside. It was Guy marching up and down like a Highlander with the pipes. Instead of pipes he held out in front of him the garden shears which he clashed as he marched. And from his lips

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came the terrible refrain, oft repeated, "Has anybody got a little girl what sucks her thumbs?" It was some time before Penelope could be coaxed out into daylight again, still protesting in a fine confusion of negatives.

Literature provides us with plenty of sad but salutary histories for the benefit of persons who may need them, and where literature fails oral tradition steps in. There is hardly any conceivable set of circumstances in which some small boy or tiny girl has not come to utter grief through failing to observe certain rules of conduct approved by the Powers that Always Are. But the said Powers may be well advised to adorn their tales with some economy of misfortune, for fear the morals may be somewhat blunted.

Take, for instance, the case of the Other Little Girl. She listened with round eyes for a year or two to stories about little girls who slid down bannisters and "sustained" broken legs, about other little girls who fell splosh into muddy ponds and were turned into frogs

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and ultimately eaten of eels, about damsels who flew up chimneys in flames, or flew down from tall trees in fragments. She absorbed the history of the pig-tailed child who approached a bull, and was tossed right up into the moon (nor has she ever come down again), and the epitaph of the rash adventuress of whom it is written, "She ate berries." There is hardly any stirring episode in the annals of disaster with which she was not familiar. The words "I knew a little girl once" came in time to be an epitome of all that the world holds of tragedy.

So far, so good. Forewarned is forearmed. The Other Little Girl should have been able to avoid everything that can disturb the even tenor of existence, but unhappily she began to put two and two together. All those little girls . . . why, there could be no little girls left if every time they wanted to do anything they were eaten, or drowned, or frozen, or something. And it was obvious that there were some little girls left—two at the Vicarage,

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Mrs. Stubbs's three, Mrs. Jones's Annie, all the cousins—there were *heaps* of them. Little girls wherever one looked. Nothing but little girls. As for their never wanting to do anything, a fig for such pedantry. Pish and Pooh!

The Other Little Girl said nothing of her discovery—it was not her way to play into the enemy's hands—but she bided her time. Opportunity would surely give her the necessary opening. It did, soon after her fifth birthday, when a scheme which she had propounded was ruthlessly declared null and void. Drawing herself up to her full height, and fortifying herself with a deep breath, the Other Little Girl began to tell a story. "I knew an old father once . . ."

It is a matter for regret that the details of that story are missing and always have been. Perhaps there wasn't really a story. Anyhow the opening sentence did its work. The Other Little Girl was never seriously bothered with apocryphal infants again. She pursued an

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uneven career without any handicaps of that sort.

It is in memory of that great victory that we are very temperate in pressing horrid examples on Penelope's notice. It was a wise oracle which suggested that victories are not two-sided. Somebody has to lose.



## V

### DINNERS AND DINERS

IF the proof of the pudding be really in the eating, our puddings are beyond either question or argument, especially that particular pudding which is shaped like a football and is richly compounded with treacle. How much of Surprise Pudding, as it is called, we can assimilate has never been proved, because of a certain convention which is based on the word "enough." One or two experiments have been made with the object of seeing at what point enough would merge into what Shakespeare calls "the great too much," but nerve has always failed the dispenser before the experiment has come to the crisis. That is very natural. When the minute Penelope has eight portions to her credit, and the slightly larger Guy nine, the responsibility of helping them into double figures seems too serious

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to be faced. Anyhow it would be mistaken kindness and might deprive them of future gratification. It is not yet proved perhaps, but it is at least probable that a burst child dreads the pudding.

Probably neither of them has got anywhere near the danger point really, for, be the helpings so many as you please within the limits stated, there is never any diminution of post-prandial activity. While older folks sit quietly awhile, with folded hands and somnolent minds, after a heavy meal, children are then most active. Catherine wheels would be the ideal exercise after dinner, but that is an accomplishment mastered by comparatively few. For our part we have to make shift with such partial expressions of exuberance as running, jumping, wrestling, and voice production.

The Surprise Pudding only falls short of the ideal in one particular, its colour. It is of a warm brown, with golden lights in it. It shares its comfortable hue with old brown sherry, with the ideal library carpet, with

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certain autumn tints, and with other well-established things. But we have recently learnt that it is not all it might be. "After the war I thought Sheakar (treacle) would be *pink*." Thus Penelope, aggrieved.

The quality of pinkness is much appreciated in certain—nay, in all—kinds of food which can acquire it. Porridge is pink, and so is custard. Almost everything of milky nature which you eat with a spoon has pinkness thrust upon it. Some cakes we believe to be born pink. The origin of it all was simple enough. There came a day when the nursery rebelled against white groats. It was, in the current phrase, "fed up" with white groats. "Take the nasty groats away," it misquoted fiercely.

The nasty groats were removed and went shamefaced back to the kitchen, while the nursery banged its spoons on the table, seeking to conceal a sensation of emptiness under a hearty manner of celebrating victory.

But victory is not good for the nursery, especially if it involves emptiness, and the

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Controller with a quiet smile did a little magic with cannisters or phials or something, stirred in a cauldron over the leaping flames, and presently up came a wonderful new breakfast dish which passed all previous experience. It had, it is true, the consistency and bulk of the groats which had been defeated, but its colour was as the first faint glow when rosy-fingered Aurora places her hand on the pearly gates of Dawn to open them. "Oo," said the Nursery and "Oo" again, and the spoons leaped to the fray like one spoon. Since then pinkness has been the staple of our gastronomies.

If that fails, the Controller will probably try the Neapolitan ice dodge. When you have colours in layers or rows you have to eat them all to see which you like best. And when you have found out you have to keep that one till last. And if you don't eat the others it can't be last. So there is your affair arranged.

Of course some things cannot of their nature be pink, Brussels sprouts, for instance, and then hesitation may have to be combated by

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some other form of brain-wave. Brussels sprouts have been rendered acceptable by the theory that they are baby cabbages which are much in favour with the fairies. Where the fairies lead we follow.

For grown-up cabbage, however, it is harder to find an argument. To say that it is "so good for" us, is to say exactly nothing. That expression is decrepit from having been kicked around the nurseries of the world for centuries. The cabbage so far as we have been able to observe is in favour with nothing except rabbits and caterpillars. Is thy servant a caterpillar? The Controller, however, intends to propound a likely theory which may place the cabbage in a more favourable light. Father Christmas—to whom be all honour—is, it appears, greatly addicted to cabbage. Mrs. Christmas gives him a large one with his turkey and plum pudding every day of his life, except when he has a parsnip or a turnip or a carrot. All these, oddly enough, are vegetables for which a good word is required.

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It was during the reign of offals when the following instance of Penelope's shrewd common sense and freedom from sentimentality was given to a noticing world. The pig, whose name was Woffles, had recently gone from among us respected by all who knew him, and not least by Penelope. She had been wont daily to repair to his sty, offering in hand, much after the manner of the "Lady who loved a swine" and who appears in the family song book. It was to be feared that Penelope would grieve for his loss, and the legend was growing up round the sides of bacon now a-curing that they had been provided by quite another pig named Rootler who flourished aforetime in Dorsetshire.

Well, one day in the time of offals, as has been said (what strange meats we did consume then, to be sure!), there came to table a dish on which was a goodly cover. Penelope sat with the earnest expression which she always wears when there is feasting toward and gazed expectantly on the cover. It was removed

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and there came to view the melancholy countenance of one who had once frisked, a blithe lamb, over the breezy down, but was now old and become mutton (where the mutton part had gone to let other more fortunate folk say).

Penelope looked long at this lacklustre visage, and then a pleasant friendly beam o'erspread her own face. "Hullo, Woffles," she said. "What Prince shall promise such Diuturnity unto his Reliques," especially if they be not his relics at all but only those of poor Wat the hedger? We can now talk of Woffles, his past virtues, and his present utility, as much as we like. As for Rootler, that worthy son of Dorset, he will keep until it is necessary to soothe the sorrows of Poggin, if any. Children, however, seem to be of sterner fibre than of old.

You have not perhaps met the chub. Anyhow it is unlikely that you have met the chub on the table. A worthy fish in other respects, he lacks some of the qualities desired in table

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delicacies. Not but what he can be eaten. In fact he has been eaten. During the period that preceded the time of offals—let us call it the time of haricots—we got to know the chub very well, his bones, his soft flesh, his weedy flavour, and everything. Had Guy complained of the chub no one would have been surprised, nor anyone, save only the catcher of chubs, pained.

*His* feelings, be it said in passing, can no longer be considered. If his basket held more trout or perch it might be otherwise. But chub, or roach! And the nearer we get to the time of roast beef the less will his “scaly spoil” (the expression is very occasionally justified, as here) have an enthusiastic welcome.

To resume. Guy worried through the time of haricots tempered by chub without any public protest, and it can only have been the too sanguine expectations of the new era that eventually caused him to lose patience with dried haddock, which, however you regard it in



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itself, is a finer dish than the most stalwart chub. Dried haddock appeared at breakfast one morning soon after November the eleventh with its customary assuredness. Guy regarded it dispiritedly. "I *did* hope," he said, "after the war God would have made a new kind of fish." Penelope turned placidly to her bantam's egg. She gave up the pretence of liking fish, old or new, some time ago, and has a special ration of bantam's eggs reserved for her.

Pieces of resistance, as they were of old, are almost unknown to us, for the time of potatoes which, as you will remember, preceded the time of haricots, had set in before most of us were out of the spoon and gravy age. Possibly they have barons of beef, shoulders of mutton, and so on in Christmas Land, where also are most of the chocolates and all the Turkish delight. No thank you, not any beef. If I might trouble you for another morsel of parsnip. . . .

The foundations of our growth are probably

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laid most securely at tea-time. Then, were you to watch us, you would understand why keeping the "fivepenny loaf at ninepence" has been costing our devoted Government forty million pounds per annum. Not that we eat as much as we could. We only eat all that there is, first spread with butter, and then—that old custom truly honoured—with the jam of the day.

That there is jam is due to the fact that the sugar has been diverted from its ephemeral habit. Save for the nursery ration,  $\frac{999}{1000}$  of the household sugar goes into the stew-pan with plums or blackberries or whatever is good and plenty, and so lives for many days or even months, instead of pleasuring a minute. The sugar basin appears at meal-times so that appearances may be preserved. It seems also to hold sugar, a few modest grains just covering the bottom. But if, being a stranger, you seek to mitigate your stewed plums or your damsons therewith you receive a shock. Those grains of sugar have been placed in situ

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with cementum or some such impregnable compost. So you scratch at them for form's sake, make the motions of sugaring your fruit for dignity's sake, and for manners' sake keep a straight face though the damsons threaten to screw you into spirals. The Controller knows how the sugar basin is organised. Nobody else does.

To resume again. As has been said, at nursery tea we stretch out our hands to the good things lying ready before us, much as did Ulysses and his companions, and when we have put away the desire of eating and drinking, we sometimes realise that there is Cake. There upon we at once resume the desire of eating, till the cake is all gone too.

It is a little curious, this Power of Cake. It must, in Penelope's case anyhow, be a sort of inherited instinct. The Other Little Girl—so the story runs—at about the same age was taken out to tea at a house four miles away, and there she met such a Cake as never was, all studded with ruby cherries and gleaming

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with sweet hoar frost. And it had a four-inch fairy on top. On the homeward drive the Other Little Girl could talk of nothing but the cake, how good it was, and how she wished she could have eaten some more, and why didn't they give her the fairy?

On the morrow the Other Little Girl was missing when tea-time came, and a sad hour or so the Powers that Used to Be had of it, searching the garden, the nut walk, the reedy margin of the Broad, in the gathering dusk. Of course you guess where she was all the time—sitting opposite that Cake and steadily working her way round till the fairy should have nothing to stand upon and so must fall, an easy prey. She came home in a luxurious carriage in due course, sleepy but triumphant, holding the fairy in one hand and in the other a note which hoped that, as the cake was really “quite plain,” an honoured guest would be none the worse.

The addiction of Penelope to Cake, when you compare her opportunities with the Other

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Little Girl's, is really rather pathetic. For what has passed for cake in these recent hungry years has, to those who remember Sweet Argos, been more like bran flavoured with chicory, sweetened with beetroot, spotted with black dried peas, garnished with potato peel, and baked in a cold oven, than anything else that can be immediately called to mind. We can imagine Dr. Johnson sampling it and observing, "Now, a fool would have swallowed that."

Yet Penelope, and in a lesser degree Guy despite his dim memories of an earlier period, gets excited about anything that is called cake. Cake may even have curative properties. Only the other day poor Penelope complained of malaise just before tea. No, she could eat nothing and would like to go to bed. Not a *little* piece of bread-and-butter? By no means. Bread-and-butter was horrid. A spoonful of cherry jam or a nice finger of toast? Not even that.

Then of course cake was not. . . . Well,

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perhaps Penelope *could* manage a bit of cake. There were three pieces of cake, one for everybody except Poggin, who does not eat cake yet in any profusion. Penelope ate her own piece and then sat looking mournful, until it was suggested that as she was such a poor little girl Someone would give up the second piece to her. So Penelope ate the second piece and felt better for it.

Then the charitable Guy made a generous offer. As Someone's piece was now gone, how would it be if they twain cut the third piece into two halves and had one each. Whereat Penelope, now much brisked up, asked why not three halves, so that there should be no one left out in the cold. This ingenious suggestion ultimately lost itself in a mathematical argument, at the end of which Guy showed conclusively that you could not cut a thing into halves for three people, though you might if there had been four, as fortunately there were not, Poggin not ranking as a fourth half.

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Penelope did not get any more cake, but she fell to on the bread-and-butter and afterwards on the bread-and-jam, and has seldom done herself better in the matter of quantity. But for Cake she might have gone to bed tealess.

While others dispute over cake Poggin addresses himself to a piece of bread-and-butter with his sleeves rolled up. You will never know how much can be done with one small piece of bread-and-butter till you have watched him at work. Having done so, you will realise that it can be turned into a mop, a quoit, a ball, and a thousand fragments, and yet serve as nourishment at the same time. Poggin is an earnest follower of the late Mr. Gladstone in his way of eating. Possibly that is because, for his age, he is unusually ill-found in the matter of teeth. But he gets there in the long run.

When we want a little diversion we present Poggin with a new taste, as a fragment of chocolate, or an eggspoonful of a strange jam,

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or something like that. His perfectly round face then screws itself up thoughtfully and remains screwed up until he has decided whether this is a worthy taste or no. If the answer is in the affirmative, he signifies the same by slowly unscrewing his face into a bland smile. In the other event he takes what steps are necessary to rid himself of an embarrassment.

It is on record that Guy treated his first strawberry (the first of the season) in that way. But it was not long before he decided that this was a mistake. Indignant clamour attended an effort to present the second of the season to someone else. In about twenty-four hours he was to be found with sundry young black-birds under the netting making up for lost time. He is now of old Dr. Boteler's opinion, who held that "Doubtless God could have made a better berry, but doubtless God never did." Latterly strawberries have been as rare as they are delightful. Only the little wild ones under the fourth apple-tree have



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given anything of a harvest, and they are considered the perquisites of Teddy and Cassandra (an alleged doll). Fortunately both individuals enjoy the delicacies of the season by proxy.

## VI

### A POOR EFFORT

“ONCE there was a little boy (or girl) . . .” The French proverb says that it is only the first step that really gives trouble, but the French proverb lies. The second step is even more difficult, and as for the third and subsequent steps, they are painful beyond belief. This art of impromptu narrative is not to be easily mastered, and yet we find that the need for mastering it becomes more pressing daily. When four round eyes are sternly fixed on you, the demand for fable or fiction having been presented in due form, the plea of an empty mind will not avail.

“Once there was a little boy (or girl) . . .” it is comparatively easy to begin in the common form. Anyone can do that. But how are you to go on? A more supremely uninteresting child than this creation of yours

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could not be met with anywhere. He (or she) just *was*, and that is all there is about him (or her).

"What happened to the little boy (or girl)"? A natural question, for the creature has now been before the public for some minutes, and has got no further than just *being*. Well, we must move on a bit. Let us invent boldly.

"And he (or she) lived in a house."

"Was it a big house? Did it have chimneys?"

"A very big house with seven chimneys."

"Why did it have seven chimneys?"

"One for every day in the week."

"One for Sunday too?"

"No, two for Sunday. It was a very well arranged house."

"Did they smoke? Did the little boy (or girl) go up the chimneys?"

Here must a final decision as to the sex of this Frankenstein be made. Undoubtedly it went up the chimneys in any case, and got as

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black as it possibly could, but if it was a little girl one could not divulge the fact. Better make it a boy, because there is a sort of lead given now, and if it were sacrificed through chivalry, some other adventure would have to be found.

"Yes, the little boy used to go up the chimneys."

"What did he go up the chimneys for?"

Now what should the pestilent infant go up chimneys for? Soot perhaps, but that sets a bad example. Ah, an idea! "He used to go up the chimneys to look for bird's nests."

"*Bird's* nests? I thought he went up to sweep them, like Tom. Did he get all black, and come down in a bedroom?"

What a treacherous thing is memory! Here has the worthy Vicar of Eversley saved us all the trouble, and yet we must go striking out new lines for ourselves because we forgot all about *Water Babies*. We are committed now.

"Oh no, they were nice clean chimneys and

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didn't need sweeping. And he didn't get black. You see, there was hardly any soot in the chimneys."

"Didn't they smoke? How did the people cook? Wasn't there no fires?"

"They only had very little fires. You see, it was war-time and the Controller only let them have their coal in sugar basins. They cooked one egg a week. And the chimneys only smoked like the end of a cigarette."

"Did they blow rings like Uncle Tertius does? Did the little boy eat the egg? Did he get it out of the nests in the chimneys?"

"No, there wasn't enough smoke to blow rings with in all that wind. It was a very windy place. The little boy used to have a little bit of the egg. No, he didn't find it in the nests. It costs ninepence in a shop."

"What else did he eat?"

Somehow this child does not fit in with the idea of good food. He is not worth it. Let him be rationed.

"He didn't eat anything else. He used to

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be up the chimneys so much that he didn't want to eat. It took his appetite away."

"Why did he eat the egg then?"

Out of pure cussedness, no doubt. But that won't do for a reason. This story-telling is simply getting out of one tangle into another.

"The egg was different. It was an Easter egg, you see."

"Was it chocolate? Did Uncle Easter bring it?"

"No, I told you it came out of a shop. It wasn't chocolate. It was an ordinary egg."

"But you said an Easter egg. And how did they cook it every week if it was an Easter egg?"

"It was an ordinary Easter egg. The others weren't the same egg. They were Advent eggs, Epiphany eggs, and twenty-third after Trinity eggs, and eggs like that. All very ordinary."

"Oh. How many eggs are there?"

This science of mathematics is the deuce. On one occasion Guy, having learnt up to twenty, asked "the name of the last count."

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Who is to say how many eggs there are? Happily we seem to be losing touch with that unmanageable little chimney boy, so let us follow this new track.

“Ever so many eggs, if you count the addled ones.”

“What’s addled?”

What, in effect, *is* addled? Lacking the vital principle, presumably, but if we say so we shall only be asked what vital principle is. Let us try the old wives’ method.

“Oh, they’re the eggs that swim when you put them in water. Other eggs sink.”

“Why don’t they all swim?”

“Because some are heavier than others.”

“Oh. Do wren’s eggs swim?”

“Not unless they’re addled.”

“But they’re ever so much lighter than hen’s eggs. Why do you want eggs to swim?”

“You don’t. It’s the last thing you want them to do.”

“Well, why do you put them in the water then?”

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"To boil them, of course."

"Oh. Did the little boy put his egg in the water?"

Back to our muttons again! The wretched little boy seems more lifeless every minute. Let us try and galvanise him into some sort of activity.

"No, he couldn't, because he was up the chimneys. And so he put his head out at the top."

"Did he put his hat on?"

"Yes, he had his hat on."

"I expect he knew he was going to put his head out."

"Yes, he was a clever little boy. And then the wind blew his hat off, and he popped his head in again for fear of catching cold."

"Where did it blow the hat to?"

"It blew the hat up into the sky."

"How high? As high as the aeroplanes?"

"Higher than that. It got lost in a cloud."

"Did he go and fetch his other hat?"

"No, you see he had gone back into the chimney, so he didn't want his other hat."



## A POOR EFFORT

"What happened next?"

What on earth *did* happen next? That is just the bother. This wretched infant mewed in a chimney gives us no scope at all. If only we had made him jump after his hat instead of tamely crawling back, we might have had some brave aerial doings. As it is there seems to be no future for him.

"Well, he just stayed where he was and thought a bit."

"What did he think about?"

A bright idea! Let us introduce a new character and see if we can side-track the chimney-child.

"He thought about his little sister."

"Was she in the chimneys too?"

"Oh no. She was a good little girl, safe in bed."

"Did she have a doll or a Teddy?"

"Yes, she had a doll."

"Where was the doll?"

"That was in bed too. They were both fast asleep."

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"Oh. Did the little boy put his head out again?"

What a misfortune is this sluggish mind! Here we have two new and useful characters and have found nothing better to do with them than to send them to sleep. They ought to have gone to a party or something. So we have the boy on our hands once more and he grows less tolerable every minute.

"Yes, when he had done thinking, he put his head out again. But by that time it had come on to rain."

"Did he get wet?"

"No, he didn't stay long enough to get wet. He went back into the chimney."

Positively he did this of his own accord. It was our firm intention to keep him with his head out, and even to let him sit on the roof. Then he could have admired the scenery, and there would have been plenty of details about trees, and churches, and villages, and all sorts of interesting things. But what can you do with a child who insists on lurking in a

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chimney when the world is so full of better places?

"Did he *always* stay in the chimney?"

This is fairly direct criticism, even if it be unconscious. Exhausted nature, however, is quite unequal to the task of furbishing up the protagonist in the drama. He must remain a monument of futility.

"Yes, pretty nearly always. You see, as he had no appetite, and didn't care for toys or anything, there was nothing much else for him to do."

"Oh."

"So that is the story of the little boy who lived in the big house with the seven chimneys."

"Is that all?"

"Yes, that's all."

"Please tell another story."

Who shall say that the child nature is not forgiving?

## VII

### THE COLLECTOR'S PROGRESS

“CAN I have it when it's empty?” You will not pass many hours with us without hearing this petition, presented to some member of the household in Guy's most insinuating manner. It does not seem to matter what “it” is, so long as it is capable of emptiness. Cardboard box, biscuit-tin, tea or tobacco packet, sugar or flour bag, anything in the nature of a receptacle is coveted and, if possible, added to the growing store.

The appetite for empty receptacles is insatiable. The inconvenient fulness of things is the only check it knows. “Would you like to have The Furlongs when it is empty?” The Furlongs is our house, and the question was asked with a vague hope of impressing on the collector the fact that there *is* a limit somewhere.

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He considered the proposition gravely. "Yes," he said at length, "and then I would put it in the toy-cupboard." On occasion we are not quite sure whether Guy speaks with entire seriousness or whether he consciously unbends and indulges what he sees to be his interlocutor's desire for persiflage. It is then that he is apt to score. A reply of that sort proves that there is *no* limit. After all, Father Christmas or one of the more important fairies could no doubt arrange to pack The Furlongs inside one of its own cupboards. It would be a fine confused situation, but by no means beyond imagining.

The beginning of the enthusiasm for vacant spaces dates back to the time when Peter sojourned with us. That god-like mortal bestrode our world like a veritable Colossus, and Guy looked up to him with the eyes of adoration. As is the bantam chick to the towering eagle, so is Four-and-a-half to Rising-eight. Peter naturally had all the interests and enthusiasms proper to a gentleman of his

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years, and he was soon attended with sincerest flattery in his uprisings, his down-sittings, in the fashion of his speech, in every course which he delighted to run. In time it became a little embarrassing to him, as can readily be understood, and he took to lengthening his stride. The "sedulous ape" must always be trying to the Exemplar.

However, before Peter had shaken himself free of his following, much was accomplished. When Guy strode in from the garden announcing, "I've got a jolly good flint," it was clear that a definite page of life had been turned. No one acquires jolly good flints who has not breathed the ampler air. It was not so very long since Guy had coincided with Penelope in regarding all small bits of stone as just "grabbles." That they could be divisible into flints and other things, including thunderbolts, had not dawned on our community. But Peter altered all that. Even Penelope took to isolating fragments of mud or what not and regarding them as luggage. A piece

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of toasted cheese removed from a mouse-trap was for some time one of her most valued possessions.

Then there were birds' eggs. If Peter excels in any one walk of life it is in the collection, classification, and housing of birds' eggs. He pursues the red-shank to its marshy haunt, he quarters the plover-country like a land-surveyor, disregarding the enticements of limping foot and fluttering wing which lead the rest of us astray. He watches the progress of the reed-warbler's nest from its first slight foundations to its crowded breaking-up day; he knows when the cuckoo is boasting of having laid up trouble for others, and can make a shrewd guess as to the hedge and the portion of it where an unfortunate little brown bird is bending a dismayed beady eye on such an egg as was never in *her* family before, and trying to make up her mind that things often turn out better than one expects. Peter knows the right number and arrangement of every clutch wherever found, and he keeps

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a "bird book" in which he makes drawings of them all. In short, so far as we can judge, nothing concerning the subject is hidden from him.

Naturally, with such a guide and counsellor on the premises, The Furlongs became at once a sort of Ornithological Society. Every morning if you looked out of the dining-room window at breakfast-time you could see signs of it, such as Penelope investigating the bushes on the other side of the lawn, or Guy stepping like Agag towards some distant blackbird with one hand outstretched and the other grasping a screw of blue paper which contained that useful bird-hunter's companion, half an ounce of best salt. He did not, it is believed, ever succeed in effecting the necessary sprinkling of a tail, but he quite realised that this was in part due to his own lack of subtlety in coming unperceived round corners. He hopes for better results when an intensive study of bird life enables him to know whether there is a bird round a corner without looking to see.



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Then a hand will be imperceptibly advanced, a pinch of salt will be applied, and the thing will have been done.

The other method is getting a cap of invisibility such as the Youngest Prince had. This has been out of the question for a considerable time. The war has had a marked effect on all haberdashery, especially that intended for princes. The democratic alternative, camouflage, has its disadvantages. We have carefully refrained from suggesting to Guy that he should conceal himself by glaring colour-contrasts. Even if he did not take the notion up, Penelope would get to hear of it and she would certainly make some experiments. The idea of a reticulated little girl would appeal to her strongly apart from all practical considerations of wild-fowling.

Penelope has not been very much more successful in regard to nests than Guy in regard to their makers. A stature of thirty-one inches imposes serious limitations. Still she did poke one nest down with a long stick and

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considered that a good result of several mornings' strenuous endeavour. It was a very old nest, but that did not matter to Penelope, while it was considered a fortunate circumstance by everybody else. The back view of Penelope looking for birds' nests in an azalea is a sight that must be seen to be believed.

In the matter of eggs our efforts have been more blessed, partly because we have all combined. The chaffinch's nest in the fork of the fifth apple-tree, the greenfinch's nest in the holly, the robin's in the ivy-wall, the willow wren's in the corner of the porch—all these have yielded an egg apiece. Then there have been blackbirds, thrushes, swallows, tits and starlings, which have contributed to the growing collection. There was a moor-hen's nest on the pond, and a partridge's within six inches of the garden door—a surprising situation for it, and it was scarcely odd that it was deserted.

The really remarkable find, however, was the mysterious nest in the shrubbery between

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the kitchen garden wall and the hedge which shuts us off from the road. This is tract of little-known country as it lies off the beaten path, and somehow it had been overlooked in previous explorations. One day, however, Guy penetrated into this remote part and presently there could be heard great shoutings and exultations. In a brief space he emerged clasping what can only be described as an EGG. It measured fully ten inches in length and had a girth of nearly twice as much.

The nest in which this trophy had been found was a substantial affair built of sticks and hay and we all went to look at it. It was agreed that it was "some nest," but what bird could have built it or laid such an EGG has never been clearly settled to this day. One of the turkeys from the farm might perhaps have done it had it been ten times as big as itself, but we have made sure that none of the turkeys are like that this year. Nor are the swans on the river, nor the herons which occasionally visit the little stream in frog-time.

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We have been forced to the conclusion that some exceedingly migratory bird of exceptional physique has been with us, but it has evidently gone on towards the North, for there has been no sign of it, nor have there been any more eggs. Penelope, after heavy thinking, suggested that it was an aeroplane's egg. Perhaps it is. Anyhow it is the gem of Guy's collection and its layer has been tentatively named *Avis guii var: ignotus*.

The only inconvenient result of this find has been the impossibility of carrying the whole egg-collection about wherever one goes, as was the custom. The part has become greater than the whole, and whereas the whole used to travel in a cigar box, the part requires a band-box. A band-box is so bulky that we have perforce had to adopt a new and more portable form of collection, leaving the eggs for purposes of reference indoors.

We have not, by the way, told Peter about the EGG. Some of us have a hesitation about doing so. He might (being a sceptic who is

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alleged to doubt the bona fides of even Father Christmas) diagnose it as having been laid in other climes by an ostrich and as having been brought overseas and placed in a prepared position by some person or persons unknown with intent to mislead. That would be a pity, because, as has been said, Peter is authoritative and when he says a thing is so, it *is* so, anyhow about eggs.

The next step in the collector's progress was taken when Guy went away to the seaside for a never-to-be-forgotten fortnight. The seaside is literally paved with material for collections. Shells of all shapes and sizes, cunningly wrought and polished stones, bits of broken green or blue glass which rolling tides have ground to smoothness—these things and much more are to be had for the trouble of stooping. We say nothing of crabs, and shrimps and popweed, because these are evanescent delights. The others can be depended upon to last as long as you are likely to want them.

It was at the seaside that Guy got his first

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real insight into the vanity of human aspirations. He saw a peculiarly desirable shell lying at his feet, and he made as if to pick it up. But, alas, he was immediately assailed with great pains and he could not achieve his object. Whereupon he complained mournfully that it hurt him to stoop "horrible." This seemed alarming, for it is not natural that a young youth of just five should suffer from lumbago, or even from stiffness.

Investigation, however, revealed the fact that it was merely a question of trouser pockets. When you have filled your trouser pockets to the brim with jetsam and have topped the two loads with a brace of large irregular stones as copings you will, not unnaturally, be hampered in stooping after more. The trouble comes in adjusting a desire for more to a determination to carry all your worldly goods in two small pockets. It passes the wit of man to make these extremes meet.

In Guy's case, of course, determination

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yielded to desire, and from that moment we date his passion for empty boxes. He was resolved never to be in such an awkward predicament again, and he now has ample storage accommodation for everything that he is likely to amass. Nominally it is all being set aside for the next visit to the seaside. Practically, however, it is developing into a lust for receptacles on their own account. The reasonable theory that "it will be very useful" has almost entirely given way to the unblushing attitude of the virtuoso, whose reason is frankly in abeyance. "That's four green ones I've got. And three brown ones. Did you *know* I'd got four green ones?"

Why, a censorious world asks, should anyone want to have four green ones? But the virtuoso goes on his mad career unheeding. Guy is not the only reasonless creature in our community. If you look at our walls you will see a remarkable assortment of what are called "speculative oil paintings" or "well-executed water-colour drawings." If you run

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your eye along the shelves you will detect as tattered a regiment of cropped quartos and imperfect duodecimos as ever cried out for notice in that doleful place of lost books over whose portals is the inscription, "All these, Sixpence."

It would, indeed, be odd if Guy, and in due course Poggin (Penelope's attitude towards the business is thoroughly feminine; that is to say, her collecting is partly imitative and partly companionable), did not run through the whole gamut of sensations which the ardent collector knows.

Some day they will doubtless have the rapture of settling down to an oil-painting which is so speculative as to be invisible and of seeing it grow under the cleaner's hand into a recognisable presentment of a face, or a tree, or a rocky coast, or whatever lies beneath the varnish and grime.

They may also come to realise how fleeting rapture can be, and re-live those few tantalising minutes when from the gloom of age-long



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varnish emerged the Queen of the Adriatic, looking as fresh and fair as Aphrodite the sea-born herself, with the gondolas, the palaces, the gay crowds, and the very light-flecks (as one dare asseverate) of Guardi's own brush-emerged, glowed, and vanished.

If the experience teaches them nothing else it will teach them to leave methylated spirit alone, and to stick to the innocuous half-potato or the relatively harmless yellow soap on a bit of soft rag. Perhaps, also, it will teach them nothing at all. That has happened in the past. Even to this day you will find a bottle of methylated spirit in a quiet corner of a certain drawer in a particular bureau, which stands in a study that need not be further specified. What a shine a spirit-moistened rag does put on a dulled surface if you whisk it lightly over! How much more satisfying is this than rubbing your dingy old picture with a silk handkerchief every day for six months!

Guy and Poggin will doubtless come to

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know the merits of that quality in a man which Horace Walpole called "serendipity," the faculty of lighting on a thing which you want particularly just when you want it. They will revel in the experience of discovering a first edition of Gray's *Elegy* in the untidy window of a small bookshop, in the purchase of the same for the ridiculous sum of eighteen pence, and in the subsequent walk homeward with head striking the stars.

Unless the memory of the rising generation is better than that of its parents, they will no doubt discover, on consulting the works of reference, that they were a decade or so out in their estimate of the first edition's date and that their purchase is really worth about a penny, being not only a mere reprint but tattered at that. But they may none the less give thanks for having been serendipitous for however brief a space. So long as you think the thing you want *is* the thing you want and not another thing, you have your heart's desire. If you have not got your

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heart's desire, then you have got something else. In later life collecting is like that, one part serendipity and the other ninety-and-nine parts experience.

In the golden years it is all serendipity because everything that you want *is* what you want. If it ceases to have that character you turn to and want something else; all things under the sun or moon are to be desired, picked up, and put into your trouser's pocket. Even dead things, or worms, so long as the Eye of Authority is turned inward in contemplation of virtue rather than outward in search of lapses therefrom.

To turn to less debatable matters. A collection which rivals the pile of boxes in importance is the album of postage stamps. Here again Peter was the arbiter of fashion, for so much of his mind as could be spared from birds was given to stamps. There is nothing to distinguish Guy's collection from many others, unless the fact that the fairies have had a share in forming it may be taken

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as distinctive. All modern collections no doubt have the same elements of strangeness—new men, new cities, new insignia. Gone are the valiant days when Britannia sat enthroned in the western islands, when the Cape of Good Hope looked at you from five brave triangles, when Newfoundland offered you an esculent codfish, and Western Australia a graceful swan. The modern stamp seems a cheap and nasty affair when compared with the fine bits of line and colour that stirred our pulses of yore.

Indeed, so strongly has this been felt that the fairies were, so to speak, consulted about it. Would it be quite out of the question to bring back a few worthy samples from the misty past, and so to make Guy's collection a matter in which a combination of effort would be more exciting? The information received was that prices had "advanced" so materially that even the fairies could not see their way to doing anything in the matter. With individual stamps marked at 4/9, 7/3, 12/6,

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and similar figures, it would be on the whole easier to collect war bonds.

So Guy's collection waxes on modern lines. Fortunately he is not haunted by a memory of an album containing many of the rare old things which once changed hands at an inclusive price of fifty shillings. He need not call upon Jupiter to bring back the vanished years.

The feminine attitude towards collecting is, as has been said, very well exemplified by Penelope. She also collects stamps. If we are not very careful she collects them from the letters which are waiting in the hall to be posted. Especially she collects them since letter-writing was visited with steadily increasing penalties.

## VIII

### FLOTSAM AND JETSAM

“**W**HO put the horse in the pond?” For someone *has* committed that atrocious act. The horse is one of those superfine animals which have a real skin, mane, and tail, and which only exist in modern nurseries as heirlooms. It has a brave cart belonging to it and harness, also a sumptuous stable with fittings—perhaps it would be safer to say it “had.” We grow very uneasy as to the permanence of things in general. We have reason, as you shall discover.

The pond itself is a constant threat to property. It would be worse if it were bigger. Fortunately its come-at-able area is not much more than a square yard, though there are caverns measureless to Guy and Penelope which spread away under the wall-work. We do not know if it has yet occurred to them

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that by pushing flotsam away into the caverns more room may be made for new crimes. Possibly not. The model fowl-house, the Quaker-Oat-box, Poggin's left sand shoe, the odds and ends of wood, and cork, and flower-pot, and wire, and paper, the trowel, the watering-can, the seaside bucket and spade—these things, together with the horse, make the pond a thoroughly congested area. Deft manipulation would have sent much of this into perpetual hiding, and the present Row—we warrant you it is an Enquiry of the Strictest and most Searching Character, such as they call for twice a day in the newspapers—would really have been no more than a sort of conference “with a view to arriving at a mutual understanding and if possible . . .” you know the good old phrases. As it is, the affair is serious.

“Who put the horse in the pond?” Guy observes blandly that he does not know.

“Did *you* put it in?” His manner becomes rather bored. Has he not said that he does

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not know who put it in? How then should he be informed whether it was himself or another? So many things get put into the pond from time to time that really it is impossible to distinguish . . . his murmurings imply that he is not interested in minute points of detail.

"But someone put it in," pursues the voice of the Court. If you hammer insistently on the same spot even the solid rock will in time become pervious to light and air.

"Yes," suddenly and surprisingly agrees Guy, his whole manner taking on a renewed brightness. "And do you *know*, when you hold it up by its tail its tail drops out?"

The Court, after this piece of testimony, has to turn to the East, whether to invoke a higher power or to smooth telltale creases from the corners of the mouth, or to convert certain inappropriate sounds into a cough, it skills not to discover. Suffice it that the witness may now stand down.

Enter Penelope, a demure atom, costumed



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in brown with blue trimmings, with tow curled in the new fashion (it is new with us, anyhow, and came into vogue on New Nanny's arrival; actually, we believe, the twining of hair round a finger was invented by Eve), and with hair-slide in proper position. The Court surveys Penelope. Penelope looks at the Court. One ringlet hangs distractingly near her left eye, giving her her most convincing "Nobody-hasn't-done-nothing" expression.

But the Court is not to be intimidated. The Court plunges in the French manner—the British having failed so dismally with Guy—into accusation. It is for the criminal to rebut or wriggle out if she can.

"The horse has been put in the pond. You're a very naughty little girl." Penelope meditates over these statements, the ringlet adjusting itself a little more bewitchingly to the left eye. There is a silence.

"The horse," we repeat, "has been put in the pond. You're a *very* naughty little girl." There is another silence. The ringlet is now

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completely over the left eye, for Penelope's head is drooping towards the right.

The Court proceeds with a slight diminution of vehemence. Justice will perhaps be met without actual tears. "You're not at all a good little girl. You . . ."

It becomes apparent why Penelope's head dropped. Her unemployed eye was directed towards a small bar of iron lying on the ground, a memorial of certain works that have been in progress. The rest of her follows the eye, and next moment she struggles upwards grasping the bar in both hands, a ringlet over each eye. "I can lift that," she declares proudly.

"Where," the Court asks itself, again facing the East, "are you with such irrelevance?" There is nothing for it but for the second witness to stand down too.

And so the Enquiry peters out, the Row dies of inanition. The only other possible witness would be Poggin, whose smile, itself an irrelevance, is subversive of all solemnity.

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And anyhow it is morally certain that he was not an actor in the affair, his opportunities being restricted. Besides in his most expansive moments he only says "Oo," emphasising the remark by pointing with his right forefinger, and no Court could take action on that. Better to resolve itself into a fatigue party and clear up the mess.

A short time has elapsed, as novelists say, and there is a silence about the house and in the precincts. No small feet patter over the cork line of the nursery, no shrill voices greet the morning, abuse the evening, or celebrate the jovial mid-way time of Dinner. We are, in a word, gone away to the sea, a little uncertain as to what we shall find there (all except Guy, who gave a confused report of shrimps, shells, gulls, sand, baskets, cake, salt water, and a modicum of cream mixed up in a kind of pudding) but very ready to take whatever "Deminshire" offers of good cheer or diversion in a hearty spirit.

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Only one person now walks in the garden, the President of the Court, and he is a little desolate. It is odd how oppressive is the absence of noise to the unaccustomed ear. A garden without its proper complement of mischief-workers is an empty place, be it never so crowded with green things and blossoms. It is saddening in its tidiness, its rectangles, its stiff formality, unbroken by irresponsible disorders or spontaneous mud pies.

"A garden," so run the Presidential meditations, "wants unconsidered touches, such as a pinafore lying in a little heap on the drive, a small straw hat crowning the rubbish heap, a doll looking out of the cinder box, a trailer ready to catch the foot of the unwary just outside the garden door, a skipping rope stretched—hullo, what's that?"

Something white is half in and half out of the box-edging, something that is certainly not formal whatever it may be. Closer inspection shows it to be Dog Toby. "How on earth did it get there?" murmurs the

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President as he puts it into his coat pocket, and he resumes his slow pacing.

This is soon interrupted by an awkward jar as a foot descends on something hard and round and rolling. Here, of all people, is the unfortunate Mr. Equal, derelict in a heap of leaves at the edge of the path. Never has there been a more chequered career than that of Mr. Equal. He has been burnt and drowned several times. He has had fearful falls through the conservatory roof. His paint has dyed a hundred fields, in a manner of speaking, and here at last is he simply "exposed" and left to perish, like the unwanted female infants of a pagan page. He joins Dog Toby in the pocket, moral reflections attending him. It seems certain that the toy-maker who sends out into the world a cross between a ninepin and a ball simply increases the troubles of that world. No matter how carefully he limns eyes, nose, and mouth upon the side of his creation, no matter how tenderly he pours melted lead into its stomach, he

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cannot make it other than a missile to be thrown, dropped, bowled, pitched or bumped into any misfortune that comes handy. For discreet and reverend seniors Mr.Equal would do very well as an idol or totem, on a writing-table, but to the rest of us he is quite obviously and necessarily something to do with dynamics. He had a bad start. He should have been "fancy goods" not a toy. And then he might have got into the upper circles and sat on rosewood. As it is he rolls in the mud. He has almost lost his claim to the title of "Mr." Soon he will be "that old fing." And then no more of him either for good or ill. Such is the sad moral of a misdirected life.

Hardly is Mr. Equal moralised, when the foot nearly descends on a group which has gathered itself together in the corner by the far gate—by that portal you go out of the kitchen garden when you want to talk to the new pig. He lives in a garden of his own, with a lot of thistles, nettles, and other interesting growths. Jungles are nothing to it.

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The group, to get back to the subject, consists of Mr. Punch, the Policeman, and the other watering-pot, the one which has a handle but no spout. The best watering-pot—it was just outside the garden door and caught the eye when the excursion began—has a spout but no handle. That is how you distinguish them. Naturally if they are together—and such a thing has been known—you grab the best one. A spout is worth two handles any day. What the group may be doing cannot be surmised, but it proves one thing beyond a doubt, the complete decay of the drama about which we hear so much. How shall the drama flourish when the chief actors are “resting”? Can Judy and the baby carry on by themselves? Have they even a stage on which to try? It is a saddening affair. When one thinks how that true patron of all that is best in art, Father Christmas, “presented” Mr. Punch in his new play, *The Bolshevik's House*, and finds that the bulk of the cast is in the provinces after no more than a hundred nights,

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one can only conclude that support has been inadequate. It is to be feared that even the theatre no longer exists as such. Perhaps it has been commandeered for other purposes, as ship-building. Anyhow it is plain that Father Christmas threw away a lot of money, as lesser men than he have done before him. Theatrical speculation is a risky business.

The Pocket is growing full, though of course the other watering-pot is not forced in with Punch. Being the other and having a handle, it can be hung on a bent finger, and so carried. And it may even be useful to reinforce the pocket if things go on thus. For, look you, between the far gate and the greenhouse is a gleaming object which seems familiar, a black thing which looks out of place, and a third shape which arouses curiosity. None of these things are gravel path, at any rate, nor are they component parts thereof—it is quite easy to tell, even from a distance, when people have been playing at ballast holes, a delightful sloppy game in which you convey the paths



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away in the wagon, having first washed them well with water from the tank. To get the water, by the way, you have to stand on a platform because the tank is so tall. Two inverted flowerpots and a flat bit of wood make a platform. There is one by the tank now. When the game of ballast holes has been in progress it leaves heaps, of course, and heaps are easily identified.

And those things are not heaps. The first, by all that is unholy, is the missing electric torch. The household has been much disturbed about that torch. The search for it has been proceeding for days. It was considered a most useful article to be taken to Devonshire, where matches may be scarce. It was of course well known that Poggin had his eye upon it weeks ago. He has the jackdaw's fondness for all that glitters. But no one really suspected him of having annexed it. It shows that it does not do not to suspect people. The pocket begins to bulge.

The black thing ten yards further on proves

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to be a small tin cooking-stove. It may have been doing duty as a camera, or a wheelbarrow, or a mowing-machine, or a hen with five chickens—you cannot tell what anything will be when Guy presses it into service, or indeed what nothing will be. For his simplicity of staging is Elizabethan, and at a pinch he will do without properties altogether. Neither Penelope nor Poggin quite enter into the spirit of this, it is to be feared. She likes to call things by their right names so nearly as she can manage it. To her the right name of nothing is "Nuffin," and not Reading Station or the good ship *Nancy Lee*. As for Poggin, if you mention cake to him in an encouraging manner, and then present him with an imaginary piece on a pretence plate, you simply ask for trouble.

And so on to the third object, a second pocket having yawned to admit the cooking stove. No wonder it was difficult to identify! Even when held in the hand Cassandra's parasol, reversed by some wind of misfortune,

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is rather confusing. But it yields to scrutiny though not to attempted adjustment. It is an awkward thing for a pocket in its inside-out condition.

At the greenhouse door there is a sudden memory of the tomatoes and of instructions that the shoots which grow in all the angles have to be pinched off daily so that the plants may achieve full vigour. The walk therefore is suspended and a quiet half-hour of work is begun. In parenthesis it may be observed that a finger and thumb of reasonable size could find more satisfactory employment than trying to grasp the lesser of these shoots! They are so minute that a microscope and forceps might with advantage be kept in every tomato house.

The more visible of the things having been abolished, the eye wanders round the greenhouse and settles on the tank. Is there any water in it? If not, it might be useful to fill it up. There is some water, or anyhow some liquid, in it, a foot of unpleasant quality.

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And there is something else in it too, a—what is it? Can it be? Where is the rake? The rake has to be fetched from the tool-house and then, very gingerly, the corpse of some small animal is extracted, with a careful holding of the breath until the grisly object is safely outside in the fresher air. What a shame! How we should have loved that dear little puppy. Who on earth could have drowned it in the greenhouse tank? It is a scene of mourning and wrath.

And then presently comes a sense of something missing. What is missing? Why, it is a smell! That object has no such effluvium as should accompany a puppy drowned this fortnight or more. Sniff! There is a sort of weedy odour, but nothing resembling the mouse which was in the cupboard just outside the nursery. There is something unnatural about this. Slowly it dawns upon the investigator that here is no flesh and blood puppy at all events. And at last the secret is out. This is the fluffy dog which Father Christmas

## FLOTSAM AND JETSAM

brought to Poggin and which became an absentee almost at once. All sorts of theories were invented to account for it—they had to be, for it was the most delightful fluffy dog you ever saw—the most likely being that Poggin had thrown it out of his perambulator during a morning walk. Here at last is the murder out. The fluffy dog went into the tank months ago and only now is the body discovered. The fluff, of course, is almost gone and the object looks as much like a real drowned puppy as any model could.

If only we were not at the sea what a first-class Enquiry we would have about this. It is worse than the horse in the pond, much.

But one comfort comes out of it all. The garden is not quite so empty as at first appeared. Its tidiness is not too much for tolerance. Only a little bit of it has been explored, and two pockets and two hands are pretty well occupied. Perhaps, before proceeding further, it would be as well to fetch the barrow.

## IX

### THE BAY OF DELIGHTS

WE have now assembled seventy-two cowers, which, as there have been only two really assiduous collectors, is not bad. Besides, the cowrie veins were worked pretty hard last year when Guy only visited the Bay of Delights, and the Atlantic does not seem to have made due preparations for Penelope and Poggin so far as renewed stores of those treasurable shells go. Perhaps it has had other things to do, what with the Armistice, the Paris Conference, and other distractions. But it has not failed in the matter of shrimps, crabs, and handy pieces of seaweed. These things are good and plenty. There are also prawns, and a sprinkling of highly valuable fishes with big heads, while of shells which you label "various" there are ample stores. So we have no cause to blame the Atlantic,

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expecially as Poggin is content with "any old thing" that is wet and flaps, while Penelope is not addicted to very patient searching. If she does not find a cowrie in the first handful, she changes her mind and collects something else, something which she *does* find.

What we call the shell beach lies close to the first boat, a strange old emblem which must have been sitting where it is for years, on a rock well beyond the reach of high tide. The seams gape with antiquity and when it last navigated the bay is beyond conjecture. Still it gives the right touch to the surroundings. You ought always to have a boat at the seaside. Besides it is a good landmark. If you tell people that at 3 P.M. you will be bathing in the shrimp pool, and that the best way to get to the shrimp pool is by the first boat and down the steps, then they can always be sure of keeping the appointment. For example, Peter and Barbara have an engagement to a mutual splashing match in the shrimp pool this very afternoon and they may

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or may not find it convenient to come by way of the first boat. Anyhow Miss Dunsleigh will come by that route, for it saves walking through the loose sand, and the road winds round from her house, past the other house which is called Apartments, the yard where the motor-bicycle is always being cleaned, and the big iron boiler thing which is always full of spring water, to the first boat. Miss Dunsleigh is a very kind lady who came to the rescue at that crisis in our affairs when it was discovered that Teddy had been left behind at The Furlongs. Ersatz Teddy, as some people call him, has saved the party from being quite incomplete. But he goes about mostly under Penelope's arm. Guy does not take very much notice of him—he is too well preserved to be quite the same.

It is very difficult to give a coherent chronicle of our doings at the Bay of Delights. There are so many of them, and they crowd so upon one another's heels that life is a perfect rush. You might just as well try to count



## THE BAY OF DELIGHTS

the sparkles on the wavelets when the midday sun and the light west wind strike on the blue sea. We live almost entirely out of doors, and we begin before breakfast with an interesting half-hour in Mrs. Dean's garden collecting burnet moths, meadow browns, and little blues. A delightful place, Mrs. Dean's garden, a rectangle of grass with a wall between it and the road and a terrace between it and the sitting-room where we live. Poggin takes useful exercise getting up and down the three steps from the terrace. Considering that he negotiates each step by sitting on it he is pretty expeditious in descending. Coming up he goes on all fours, which is quicker still. But sometimes he does not come up, and in that case you may be pretty sure that he has made his way round to the farmyard at the back of the house, or at any rate to the wooden gate which leads to it. Should that happen to be open, he finds pigs and hens, and calves, a dog, mud, and other dispellers of ennui. He has to be fetched immediately.

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But the announcement of breakfast dispels all regrets, even about the pigs, for we are always extremely anxious to eat something here. The sea air and the strenuous life give us a gnawing in our insides at frequent intervals. When you see Poggin, spoon in hand, taking stock of the porridge, fish, bread, butter, jam, and any other possibilities with a serious countenance and wondering whether there will be enough, you understand why his two chins threaten to develop into three. We are a little nervous about that, for it was not intended that a seaside holiday should have such an effect. People want building-up, it is true, but not fortifying round about.

After breakfast the procession is formed and all the necessaries are collected. The big shrimping net, a jam jar with a string handle for carrying, two little baskets, paddling outfits, changes of raiment, towels, the wherewithal to sustain life at 11 A.M., all these things are either put into the perambulator (a hired conveyance with an uncertain wheel

## THE BAY OF DELIGHTS

which wobbles) with Poggin, or committed to various hands, and so we start.

The procession turns out of the garden gate sharp to the right and proceeds along a curly road between low dusty hedges as far as Miss Dunsleigh's house. It is just possible that she may be in the garden and then there is the off-chance of a biscuit or a bit of chocolate—Miss Dunsleigh has a very good idea of what people want who are going to spend a morning on the beach. Soon afterwards we leave the road, and take a sandy lane to the left which leads downhill in about thirty yards to the edge of the beach. There is always an exciting incident halfway because the perambulator has to be got across the tiny stream which makes its way down the middle of the path. Somehow this stream has acquired a bad name, why, it is not quite clear. Penelope elevates her small nose when she looks at it, exclaiming, "Jains," in an offended manner. But it is much too small to have anything to do with a drainage system, so it is likely that

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Penelope is misinformed. A little lower down the beach the thread of fresh water loses itself in the sand, being no more than a line of visible dampness. The same thing is noticeable with another little stream, almost a tiny brook, which runs into the middle of the bay. This is disappointing because we should like to have a proper estuary with a bore and eels in it.

Once across the so-called drain stream we have only a few yards to go and we are at the tent. This is a home from home to us, and here we take our *al fresco* repasts, change our clothes when necessary, and take shelter if it rains. When you open the flap in front and look in, the tent seems an unfurnished sort of place, just a sandy floor diversified by small bits of driftwood or dried seaweed. But if you will have the goodness to dig a bit with your hands you will find all sorts of treasures, three spades and three buckets, for instance, a spare jam jar, one of Poggin's socks—mislaid yesterday,—two small shrimping nets, a paddling towel (the same colour as the sand),

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several small pairs of sand-shoes, and so on. For we are more artful than we look, and when we don't want the trouble of carrying things home in the evening, we just bury them in the soft sand. Nobody would think of digging for them, so they are quite safe. Sometimes indeed they are too safe for even *we* cannot find them.

One night it blew half a gale from the west, and properly it made the windows rattle. When you are snug in bed it is thrilling to hear the wind whistling round the house and the heavy beat of the rollers as they thunder up the bay. It is an adventure to go to sleep to such a lullaby. But next morning there was still more of an adventure, for when we got to the beach, behold, there was no tent at all, only a heap of sand. The storm had not only blown the tent down but also buried it, and Mr. Dean and one of his men had to come and dig it up again. We had a terrible time finding all our belongings that morning. It is not certain that everything *was* found. For

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instance, the matchbox containing a burnet moth, a caterpillar, and two leaves, has gone astray. Guy is not conscious of having buried it in the tent, but he has looked everywhere else in vain.

The tent, now re-established, stands at the foot of the sand-hills and fifty yards from the beach proper, that is to say from the point where the sand begins to be firm and hard. At low-water the actual sea is a long way beyond that, three hundred yards or more. But you need never worry about the distance, because on each side of the bay there is a reef of rocks, and they provide all that you want in the way of water. There are pools of all shapes and sizes, from the big shrimping pool where we bathe to the tiny basin in which Penelope systematically plies her net in the belief that it ought to contain a shrimp. It doesn't, but it is a nice easy place to fish. So far her contribution to the joint bag has not been extensive. A dubious-looking green worm about an inch long, a leech-like creature,

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has been her chief original capture. But she is fairly skilled at re-capturing tiny dabs or insignificant bullheads which others have released in little sand-pools. It is thought that she cherishes a hope of persuading one of these minute creatures to take to life ashore by gradually accustoming it to absence from water. There is a good deal of argument about it from time to time.

Guy has caught one or two shrimps, several crabs, and a dab or two, and he has had one very exciting morning with a conger eel of fully eight inches which slithered up and down one of the ledge pools pursued by a net and ecstatic shouts. Several times it seemed as though the eel must be caught, but it always wriggled away at the last moment. Finally it got into some crack in the rock whence nothing could dislodge it. There have been a dozen tides since then and the conger is probably at Land's End by now, but Guy's invariable suggestion, as a first item in the morning's proceedings, is "Let's go and catch the eel."

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He has other matters to attend to also, being under contract to take a pearl home with him, for presentation to his friend William, who is now returned from the war and with whom Guy discusses things in general every day in the kitchen garden. How the undertaking came to be given is not clear, for it is only the tail-end of a conversation that has been reported. But Guy has certainly committed himself to a pearl—indeed he said that there would be no difficulty at all about getting one, though he was by no means so sure of a crab which was also under consideration. Other things for which plans were laid were a mermaid and a submarine. These, however, were not necessarily to be captured and placed in a bag. Faithful description by a competent and trustworthy witness was all that was called for here. Sometimes we think that the scarcity of pearls, mermaids, and submarines is beginning to wrinkle Guy's brow with thought, but it must be some comfort to him to know that the far more difficult crab is



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already accounted for. It should encourage him.

The fishing of these rock pools is no feather-bed repose. It is real hard and dangerous work, for the rocks are either arranged in razor edges or, where to a superficial pressure of the foot more comfortable, are extremely slippery. And so when you step swiftly from the sharp knife that threatens to divide sand-shoe and foot into halves to the rounded protuberance that looks so comfortable, you no more than feel its soothing pressure in sliding onward. And the next thing is that you are on hands and knees on further razor edges, and Penelope is hurrying up to get a good view of the Blood. For people always bleed somewhere when they have come to grief among these rock pools. Indeed further stocks of plaister had to be procured to meet the constant demand. Penelope has a scientific interest in the way in which blood flows, though naturally observation is less biassed when the precious stream emerges from somebody else. If she fetches

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a tumble herself it is a case of "present company excepted."

As a matter of statistics more blood has been shed by others than by Guy, Penelope, or Poggin. The further you have to fall the worse, of course, is your affair.

Some of the other people at the Bay of Delights rather fight shy of the rock pools. Peter and Barbara, for instance, whose tent stands some twenty yards away from ours, spend much more time in ascending the sand-dunes at the back of it and then either rolling or sliding down their smooth surfaces. That is a very admirable entertainment also. There is less obvious fascination about the pastime of the Bucket Baby, who may be seen any morning or afternoon conveying water from the shrimp pool to the sand beside it. She does nothing else, nothing at all, and a well-found spade lies unused behind her. She has been accused of being a great-granddaughter of Danaüs, whoever he was.

The Bucket Baby is rather hard to under-

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stand. Poggin, especially, who is her junior by a matter of perhaps six months, surveys her proceedings with open wonder. She is apparelled for almost any emergency up to twelve inches deep, at a pinch thirteen, and yet she never goes in above her ankles. So she has sea-room to fill half a bucket, she is amply content. Now Poggin cannot be apparelled for emergencies—he can only be disrobed. The ordinary paddling gear is no good in his case because it is devised for paddling, not for sitting down. And the first thing he does with water is to sit down in it, wearing his broadest smile and beating with his hands on either side. His friend and coeval, Macpherson, (he of the reddish hair) is, we understand, of much the same mind. They are to abandon compromises and bathe together the first afternoon that it is considered warm enough for a prolonged immersion. Macpherson is not quite so round as Poggin—these Scotsmen are a bony lot—and it may be that he would feel the cold. Poggin does not

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seem to do so. Long after Penelope is blue and Guy shivering, Poggin is rubicund from ear to ear. What he loves best is to run down to the real sea and to plant himself in the path of the seventh wave. That makes a person properly wet, also any other persons who may be in pursuit, which naturally adds to the pleasure of it all. Should he, by the way, be in normal outdoor costume and not apparelled for any form of water sports, he testifies his dissatisfaction, if opportunity offers, by lying down flat in the deepest place he can find.

We have here three elements, air, water, and sand, and the third is perhaps the most prominent. It fills not only our shoes and stockings but our whole lives. Towels, sponges, hairbrushes, books, tobacco pouches, pipes, work-boxes, pockets—sand invades everything. And you never know where you are with it. For instance, a week ago come Tuesday Peter was for doing a deed of heroism to inspire Guy, whose bathing is rather a paltry business. He would show that a fellow

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*can* wet his head and still remain calm. Unhappily the exhibition did nothing to encourage Guy to follow suit. For the bucket, thanks to Barbara's unobtrusive spade work, held not plain water but sand-soup. And so when Peter with fine gestures emptied it over his own head, the result was, as they say, "very otherwise." It unsettled even Peter's convictions. Guy shuddered. But Poggin laughed with great heartiness. He sees that sort of joke at once.

We eat a good deal of sand, of course. Our mid-morning repast and our afternoon tea, being consumed on the beach, are always sandy. But the taste of a thing is not impaired thereby and if, as the old Malter said, "you don't chaw too close" a gritty quality in the food is hardly noticed. Some people are more particular than others. Penelope one day found a bit of cake which had been inadvertently buried in the tent with the buckets, but she made no finicking complaints. On the contrary, she returned hearty

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thanks to a bountiful Providence and ate the cake at once. But the little dark boy—we think his name is Izaak but we are not quite sure—who dropped half a bun yesterday morning, though he said the accident mattered nothing, carefully washed his half-bun in the shrimping pool for all that. It must have acquired a curious new taste. Izaak, if that be his name, seems none the worse, we are glad to see, and he wears as flourishing a face as either Ephraim or Manasseh. So it evidently doesn't matter which way you eat your bun.

Sometimes, when all our clothes except one set are a-drying or when it seems too cold and windy for the beach, we make a party of pleasure and visit the cave, or the second boat, or even walk round the headland. But here Poggin cannot accompany us, perambulators being forbidden beyond the cliff gate where the little garden is. It is much too thrilling a place for perambulators, which are apt to run light-headedly down steep places. People

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without wheels, however, are allowed to go there if they hold tight on to other people.

The cave is a mysterious place which might, it is thought, shelter a mermaid—it is fully big enough, and there is quite a deep pool at its mouth which always holds water even at low tide. In the pool is a large green crab, but no mermaid has been seen so far. Perhaps she only comes after high spring tides. We have all been photographed at the cave's mouth, and we have learnt the elements of ducks and drakes (a most seductive exercise) with the aid of the pool which is waveless and well adapted thereto.

The climb down to the cave is helped by a set of roughly cut steps. The climb back from the cave is hindered by the vanishing of the said steps. If it was not Devonshire and the twentieth century we should have said that it was some sort of Lorelei business, luring people down to the cave with hopes of a mermaid and then taking away the path by which they came. Being Devonshire and

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1919 we have come to the conclusion that on departing one always goes for what looks like the first step and isn't, so missing what doesn't look like the first step and is. You *can* get up the wrong way, but it is uncertain what would happen if a mermaid or a big crab were in pursuit.

There are more steps, and much more important ones, leading down to the second boat. This is the effective shipping of the district and it has a delightful little railway of its own on which it runs from the higher cliff to the deep water in the rock gulley. We have not seen it running, but we are assured that it sometimes does so in the calm weather. The gulley provides what sea anglers call a "station." We have used it as such twice. We nearly caught a crab, one of the good eating kind, but he let go his hold just as we had decided how he should be cooked. It was a sad business.

Beyond the second boat is the headland, a curved bluff of short slippery grass, with



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masses of bright thrift by the upper path, and low gorse bushes dotted about. The lower path winds giddily round by an edge which goes sheer down to black rocks. Strengthless heads are better on the upper path. And anyhow you can see all you want to from there, the grim dark sea breaking in white foam on the fierce coast, the gulls wheeling above, the evening sky paling to pink, and perhaps a small black ship afar off sailing away to the Happy Isles.

Having walked and watched on the Headland awhile, we turn homewards with minds intent on that long table on which Mrs. Dean is even now spreading good things. We can never stay up here long without remembering that table. For the air between sea and sky is like knives and forks.

And afterwards when the good things are all finished and properly bestowed, the memory of that air is like pillows. We burn no midnight oil at the Bay of Delights, we light not even a twilight taper. Young and old

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alike, we are asleep ere Hesperus looks in at our windows. For what a blessing is this sleep, dreamless and lulled by the murmur of the western sea, after all those years when sleep was but a tissue of uneasy memories—and waking was a return to war.

## X

### FROM A DIARY OF TRAVEL

“O H, dear, we’re coming to Midminster and there are sure to be a lot of people getting in. Let’s crowd up a bit. Now, Penny, you sit on that suitcase and look as tall as you can. Guy, you—Penny, *will* you sit still? No, you *don’t* want to see the cow. There wasn’t a cow, and if there was it’s left behind long ago. No, Guy, she didn’t pinch you, and there’s no call for you to correct your sister. You’re a bad little boy yourself. I put you on the tea basket, and you’ve got to stay there. You’ve got to look ferocious out of the window to keep all those everybodies out. What’s ferocious? Oh, it’s . . . it’s . . . Why, it’s what Mr. Nobody looks like, or the Lion Man. Yes, that’ll do very well. Frown a bit more and show your teeth. No, Penny, you can’t be both of them. All

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right, you be the Lion Man then. Wave your mane. Yes, roar if you like. Poggin be Satan? Good idea! Pass him over. Now Woggins look your horriddest. What about tying a handkerchief round his head? Then they'll think he's got mumps. I'm *not* insulting him. If he will eat so much . . . We're coming in now. Keep it up, children. Penny get back on the suitcase *immediately*. Guy, *this* is the side we stop at. Penny, if you don't . . . I don't know what he's crying for: doesn't like the black houses, I think. But it'll do as well as Satan. Howl away, Woggins. Oh, confound. . . .

Yes, they're sending a tea-basket out. And the bottle of water. Oh, I think there's plenty of time. No, I *must* wait for the basket. Here don't shut that door. Hi, you there, Miss—Madam—tea basket—Hi—Hi—come on, we're off—do hurry up. Thanks, thanks. Catch hold. Oh, I *beg* your pardon, sir. Guy, *will* you stop wandering about the carriage?

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We're going to have something more to eat now. No, Penny, you finished all the strawberries between you. Squashy ones? They went out of the window. Yes, no doubt, and what would you look like now? Excuse my reaching across you, sir. Bottle only half full? Well, they must wait till we get to Sixborough. There'll be time to fill it again there. Here you are, Woggins, you needn't make such a row. No, Penny, bread and butter first. All right, Guy, hold it carefully and don't spill it. No, it's not Poggin's mug, it's yours. Someone fill Woggin's mouth for him. You'd think he hadn't seen food for a week. I'm *so* sorry, sir, I hope it hasn't splashed over you. Penny, if you can't hold a mug without spilling it you won't get any more. Hullo, stopping again? It must be Sixborough.

I *thought* that young man would find it a bit too crowded. He only got in out of sheer obstinacy, confound him. We're all right till

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we get there now, thank goodness. No, we're not there yet. Not for an hour. Look here, Guy, you look out of this side and count horses and Penny look out of the other and count pigs. Yes, Woggins, isn't that fun? Pull it down like that and let it go whop, like that. These spring blinds—did um hurt um's finger then? Oh the poor wee Woggins! All right *you* look after him. Of *course* there are pigs, plenty of them. You go on looking out. There's one with a curly tail a bit further on. Well, you'll get one with a curly tail your side, too, if you look hard. No, it isn't an hour yet. Come on, Woggins, then, only if you pinch your finger again don't blame me. *You* leave Woggins alone, Guy. This is *his* blind, and we don't want *you* interfering. Why? Because I say so. And don't you forget it No, we're not there yet. Well, what did you take it away for, you silly little girl? Guy, if you slap Penny again you'll get it in the neck. Penny, go back to your corner and you'll see a white cow. Yes, a donkey too. Yes, very

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likely there will be an elephant, but only if you keep a sharp look-out. No, it is *not* an hour yet. You can't wish we were there more than I do. Food? Now you're talking. Let's have the basket out again.

I *knew* Woggins would fall off if you let him dance on the seat. Let him have the blind again. It comforts him. Yes, we are nearly there now. How nearly? As nearly as makes no difference. Look, that's the River Thames. Look at the boats. Yes, I should say the people know we're nearly there. They can probably hear us. No, Penny, you can't get out and go in a boat. You shall go in a motor car very soon. Don't you want to see the garden, and William again? Yes, *and* the toad. Certainly you shall see the toad. The lobworm too, if he's still there. In another quarter of an hour. No, it isn't a quarter of an hour yet. No, not yet. It's thirteen minutes now. No, not yet. You *do* want to get there? Yes, we are beginning to realise that.

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Look here, just have a last look out for the pig with the curly tail. And you, Penny, on the other side. All right, Woggins can have another go at the blind. Yes, we're nearly there now. Only five minutes. No, it's not five minutes yet. Count up to ten six times over slowly and that will be a minute. Well, do it again. A quarter of an hour late? It looks like it. Is there any left? Out with the basket then. A biscuit apiece. . . .

Well, it's a mercy to be home, even if one *is* nearly dead. If the children are half as worn out as . . . hullo, where are *you* off to? But it's long past bed-time. You must see *everything*? And the toad? All right, run along. Tell Guy that he's not to begin on the sand heap to-night, and *you* are not to play in the pond.



## XI

### IN THE ATELIER FURLONG

“PLEASE, can I have a pencil? I want to jaw. And some paper.”

“Me too, please.”

“Here you are. Two pieces each. Don’t break the points.”

“No, *I’m* drawing here. You go and draw on the sofa.”

“Can I have the *Field* book to jaw on?”

“All right, take it.”

“Do *you* know what I’m drawing? I’m drawing a mouse.”

“That’s good. Give it a curly tail. Hullo, Penny, what are you doing? You’re not to scribble all over the leading article. You draw on that paper I gave you.”

“Can I jaw on this old gentleman with the beard?”

## OURSELVES WHEN YOUNG

"Who? Oh, Mr. Dunlop. Yes, you can draw on him. He's an advertisement."

"What's an advertisement? I've finished my mouse. What shall I draw now?"

"Oh, draw another mouse."

"My pencil won't jaw any more. Will you cut it with your knife?"

"Now, don't lean on it so hard this time. It isn't a crutch. You've pretty well done in poor Mr. Dunlop, haven't you?"

"What's 'done in'? I'm doing my other mouse. Did you *know* I was doing another mouse?"

"I can do a mouse. At least I could if my pencil would jaw. Will you cut it again?"

"You don't want a pencil, Penny. What you want is a crowbar. Now be more careful this time."

"I've finished my other mouse. What shall I draw now? Shall I draw Woggins?"

"Yes, why don't you? Draw him in his new hat."

"How do you draw a hat?"

## IN THE ATELIER FURLONG

"Put a straight line on top of his head and stick a feather in it."

"*I* can jaw a fevver. My pencil's bwoke again."

"Try drawing with the other end. That won't break."

"Woggins has got two legs and two arms. Did you *know* he'd got two legs and two arms? Isn't he a funny little boy?"

"It won't jaw that end. I don't want to jaw any more. Can I have the china dog?"

"No, you can't. You know you'd break it. I'll sharpen your pencil again. Look here, why don't you draw a pig, like this?"

"Let me see. *I* want to see. Draw a pig on *my* paper."

"No, you draw a pig for yourself, it's quite easy."

"How many legs has a pig got? I don't think I want to draw a pig. I won't tell you what I'm going to draw. I'm going to draw something very important."

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"That's right. Give it a curly tail."

"*Houses* don't have tails! Did you *know* I was drawing a house? That's the chimney. Now I shall draw a tree."

"*I* can jaw a tree."

"Look what Penny's done! She's drawn a tree. *Isn't* she a clever little girl?"

"Clever little Penny."

"*Aren't* I a clever little girl? Can I have the china dog now?"

"Clever isn't the word for you. No, you can't have the dog."

"Well, can I have a piece of chocklate then?"

"Oh, and me. Can we *both* have a piece?"

"Which do you like best, Penny, chocolate or cake?"

"I like chocolate *and* cake. Can I have another piece—for Woggins?"

"You'd eat it. You wouldn't carry it to him."

"Yes, I would, if I could have a piece to eat while I carry it."

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"If *she* has another piece, I must have one too."

"I've took it to Woggins. He was very pleased. Can I have the china dog now?"

"No, Penny, you can't. Come and sit here and I'll draw you a dog."

"Draw me one too."

"All right, you come and sit on the other side."

"There's his eye, and his tail. Isn't that a nice dog?"

"He's *rather* like a pig, isn't he?"

"Pig? No, here's a pig. Now you see the difference."

"Do another pig. No, do a cow—with a crumpled horn. What's that you're doing?"

"What do you think it is?"

"It's a little boy. What little boy is it? Is it Woggins? Now do one of Penny."

"And one of Guy."

"There you are, all three of you, just like life."

"Do Teddy too."

"And the pram. And Nanny. And the

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house. And the manure heap. And a hen with an egg. Why is the hen going away from the egg? Who's going to have the egg?"

"You watch and see."

"Look, Penny, what's coming after the egg. A rat, or is it a mouse? Oh, and there's a boy running. Who's that boy? Will he get the egg? What will he do with the egg? Will he eat it? Do rats eat eggs? Why do they? Now draw Mr. Nobody."

"And Satan."

"I can't draw them, I'm afraid."

"Why can't you?"

"Father Christmas wouldn't like it."

"I can jaw Satan, if my pencil wasn't bwoke."

"Yes, and do *you* know? Penny drewed Satan all by herself and Nanny said, 'Is that a tree you've drawed?' Wasn't it funny?"

"An' I jawed the Lion Man too. But he's good now and wouldn't hurt little children at all, Nanny says. Can I have the china dog now?"

## IN THE ATELIER FURLONG

"By Jove, it's your bed-time now. Here's Nanny coming to fetch you."

"I don't *want* to go to bed."

"And I *want* the china dog."

"Listen. If you're *very* good children—are you going to be my good children?"

"If what?"

"Well, if you're very good children and go straight up to bed and don't make a fuss, I shouldn't be surprised . . ."

"Surprised what?"

"Well, I shouldn't be surprised if the fairies . . ."

"Fairies what?"

"Well, if the fairies brought you each a small parcel in the night."

"Will they? Come along Penny."

"Aren't you going to say good-night?"

"Oh, *good* night. I'll be upstairs first."

"No, I *will*."

## XII

### PRINCIPALITIES AND POWERS

THE other day Penelope was observed to be acting in an unusual manner. For one thing she was quiet, which is a benefit not expected on a wet afternoon when it draws on towards tea-time. As a rule on such occasions she joins, nay leads, the rest of the company in uproar. Being quiet, therefore, Penelope was deemed worth watching. She passed furtively, as you might say, from corner to corner. When she paused, as she did now and then, her lips moved and she made whispering noises. Withal, there was an air of subdued triumph which was intriguing. A natural question was asked, but Penelope paid no attention. Instead she sidled off to the toy cupboard and apparently whispered into the keyhole.

It fell to Guy to offer an explanation.



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"Penny's being Satan, and she's teaching people to do wrong. And I'm Mr. Nobody," he added, "taking all the things away." He held, in fact, a waste paper basket which was half full of miscellaneous property, and also was patrolling the nursery without ostentation. These are regrettable habits of Mr. Nobody, whose doings, as has perhaps been made manifest already, are always surrounded with mystery. As for Satan, we naturally know a good deal about him. Who doesn't? But that he should be regarded as a model is rather a new and disturbing idea. It may be necessary to invoke the aid of Father Christmas in the matter; the rebuking of sin will become difficult if sin becomes a fashionable indoor amusement on its own account.

For among the Beings who regulate our waking lives Father Christmas is still easily pre-eminent. He is revered not merely as a working hypothesis but as an ascertained fact. Since that never-to-be-forgotten evening when a figure all resplendent in scarlet,

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with snowy beard, long black boots, and much delightful luggage, came through the trapdoor from the roof with a rumbling yet cheery "Well, children, here we are at last," we have naturally referred all doubtful and difficult questions to his arbitrament. This Satan-business comes emphatically within his scope.

Father Christmas may be trusted to deal with it as he dealt with other kindred difficulties. The coupon method proved very successful on the whole, though we got off rather more easily than we feared might be the case. No less effective was the other up-to-date device which is called "To-day's Grave Warning." It was plain that he had studied his newspapers to good purpose and learnt how to harrow erring souls. "I have it from official sources"—thus the worthy Father—"that by next Christmas there is likely to be a serious shortage in string and brown paper, and so only for exceptionally good children will it be possible to make up any parcels worth

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mentioning." Then followed a list of doings which might tend to emphasise the shortage, and we listened to it with earnest attention.

Nor have we wholly forgotten, even though months have elapsed. Does not the wonderful Letter hang on the nursery wall with its further injunctions towards good behaviour? For we composed a letter of thanks after the visit, posted it in the attic under the trap-door, and in due course received a reply measuring 30 in. x 24 in. It was written in fine large letters like print, embellished with wonderful drawings of holly, pointing hands, Christmas Palace, plum-puddings, and other delights. And it had a great red seal and was signed "William Christmas." When we look at it (the glass for framing it cost the eyes of your head) we always think of parcels and the grave warning, and so it hangs on the south wall a perpetual influence for betterment.

We have another memorial of the great day in the shape of a most lifelike photograph. It seems that the fairies concealed themselves

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in the attic somewhere and photographed the scene when Father Christmas had stepped down from the trap-door. In the foreground is Poggin dancing like David before the Ark and somewhat to the right Guy and Penelope stand exactly like good little children. Father Christmas is a heroic figure about ten feet high to the left.

When Uncle Tertius saw this photograph he rather disparaged the work of the fairies. "It's not bad," he said, "but it's rather out of focus and that line could have been got out, I think. These fakes take a bit of doing." And he ran his finger down a sort of smudgy curtain between Father Christmas and the rest of the company. Which, we thought, was slightly mean of Uncle Tertius, especially as he wasn't there. For, though it had been fully intended that he should be at the ceremony, and though he was certainly sitting at tea in the dining-room half an hour before it and as certainly appeared at supper in the same room an hour or so after it, when the great moment

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came there was no Uncle Tertius anywhere. A theory emerged afterwards, which was that he had gone to sleep on the sofa in the study and so forgotten all about the matter. At the time, fortunately, we forgot all about Uncle Tertius in face of greater attractions, so the defection did not mar the hilarity of the proceedings, as they put it.

Not quite so well realised a figure, but highly respected, is Mrs. Christmas, whose opinion is final on all matters relating to what people ought to eat. She was good enough to send some very acceptable parcels in Father Christmas's pack. Then there is Father Christmas's nephew, Uncle Easter, who is also very highly esteemed. We just got a glimpse of him early in the morning. He wore a venerable top hat, a good deal of reddish whisker, a very heavy overcoat with a striking check pattern, and white flannel trousers. He was evidently a person of pronounced individuality, but we only had a back view of him as he hobbled away down the garden path. He is a

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good deal younger than Father Christmas, but he keeps up the family tradition nobly, and the basket he left was undeniably well furnished. So, indeed, does a distant cousin whom we have not seen, a very kind elderly lady named Aunt Bank Holiday. She sent by carrier "with kind regards" a trailer, a small perambulator, and a large well-painted india-rubber ball, so her influence for good is considerable.

The strivings of this excellent family have hitherto availed a good deal against the works of Satan, Mr. Nobody, and the Lion Man who make a sort of combination of badness in the affairs of life. The Lion Man began by being a harmless fiction. It was necessary to keep Guy from entering a toy shop and it was represented to him that an aged nomad, to whose battered hat, unkempt beard, and generally wild appearance he had previously taken exception near the station, was probably seated within. The nomad was summed up as

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undoubtedly "horrider than a wild lion," and so he took permanent shape as the Lion Man. What he does is not quite clear, but he must aid and abet Mr. Nobody in general nefariousness. And he is certainly a dangerous person to have about, because even though his attributes be vague, it takes no great effort to invent things that he *might* do. It would, for instance, be certainly in keeping with his character to pursue the smallest chickens with a stick, or to let out the two broody hens from their place of detention and chase them back into the fowl-run. While at the same time Mr. Nobody is emptying the water-troughs or opening the pig-sty door, and Satan is possibly breaking an egg (market price fivepence) or striking stolen matches among the straw and hay, we realise the advantage of having the strong Christmas combination on the side of goodness.

The fairies have already been spoken of, and there is not very much more to be said about them, except that they seem to have started

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a kennel. Penelope only a day or two ago discovered this. She came in full of a fairy dog which she had just seen. It was a dear little dog—so big—and she was quite sure “it wouldn’t bite nobody.” Confirmation of the vision came later in the day when a dead rabbit was found quite close to the place where it had been seen. The rabbit had a wound at the back of its neck. Further confirmation was received next morning, for the little door of the fowl house was inadvertently left open and in the night Elizabeth, doyenne of the company, passed sadly away. Her mangled remains were eloquent of fairy dogs and their ways. We cannot agree with Penelope that these interesting little animals do not bite, and we think the fairies ought to have muzzles for them.

There is one more new thing about the fairies which is to be recorded, and that is the “blackening-stone.” Here is Penelope’s account of it, reported verbatim:

“It’s got blacked with the blackening-stone,



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and the fairies brought it, cos I'd been such a good little girl, and they put it on my face, and William got it from them, and they brought it, and William done it, and my hair too, and it's a blacking-stone, and it was the water fairies, and Guy found it, and then I rubbed it over me, and Guy done it too, and William said it was the fairies, and it was a blacking-stone, and Nanny wasn't there, and we rubbed it on Woggins's head, and it was all black, and the road-fairies put the sand over Guy, and Woggins sat down, and the fairies have took it away now."

Penelope always takes some time to get started on an explanation, as she likes to arrange her thoughts in a good round shape before giving utterance to them, but once started she gives plenty of details and alternatives in order that people may not be in any doubt as to what has happened. So we feel that we know a good deal about the blacking-stone now. The fact that men have been tarring the road outside the garden helps us to

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understand how complexions suffered such a change. But the road-fairies are newcomers and we have not previously made their acquaintance. We are a little apprehensive as to the appearance of other hitherto unrevealed tribes, connected with the rubbish heap, perhaps, or even with the corner where the manure is bestowed. It may be that Father Christmas will have to look into these manifestations also.

Mother Goose, who was at one time in good repute and well established in Father Christmas's circle, has rather lost caste, owing to an unfortunate coincidence. Old Nanny when on the point of departure said she thought it possible that Mother Goose might come to supervise the nursery for a while. Owing to the fact that as a general rule Nannies had adopted the profession of arms and were now called Sergeants, it seemed improbable that anyone else would follow Old Nanny unless Mother Goose "obliged." And then, most unfortunately, we came on a picture of Mother

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Goose in the Ring of Roses book and, behold, she wore a determined expression and held an efficient stick in her hand. That put a stopper on Mother Goose, and for a time she was regarded with considerable suspicion. In fact she is hardly restored to favour yet. It will require a good snowstorm to re-establish her. A white mantle covers many a doubtful disposition.

The world of course holds "all sorts," as proverbial philosophy bids us to remember, and we should not on the whole be surprised to meet any of them anywhere. Giants, for instance, are to be reckoned with. It has been settled that the measure of a giant is his ability to look over the walnut tree without standing on tip-toe. The modern giant is fortunately a well-disposed individual of blameless habits, and he is all right so long as you do not get trodden on by accident. Thanks to his carrying-power, he might be induced to bring another load of sand in one of his pockets now that the old sand-heap is getting worked-out.

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Or he might be turned on to other useful works, such as diverting the little stream from the far side of the meadow so that it should run through the garden. We could, in fact, do very well with a giant about the place.

Penelope in particular has some heavy lifting which she wants done. There is an enormous stone which covers some mystery in the stable yard and she often stands meditating on the possibilities that lie beneath. What she expects to find there is not revealed, but it evidently irks her that there should be a big stone, with possibly something under it, and she unable to do anything in the matter. Lesser problems she has been able to solve unaided. Only a day or two ago she was heard singing a sort of aria to herself as she came round from the kitchen door to the lawn. It ran as follows: "The sun's out, little Penny's out, two jains is took up, little Penny's took 'em up." The drains were the iron gratings from either side of the kitchen door. She carried them masterfully one in

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each hand. But the big stone calls undoubtedly for a giant. It is what Homer described as a "shameless" stone.

For our graver hours there are of course angels, but we are not intimate with them as we are intimate with fairies. We know gratefully that they watch over us in the darkness and we sleep soundly under their protection. But we do not ask them to bother themselves about purely mundane matters. There is therefore no clash of functions or confusion of spheres. The only moot point is whether Father Christmas is an angel or not. He possesses so many attributes which qualify him for the position that it seems as if he must be one. In that case there is one angel at least who is bothered about mundane affairs a good deal. Control of the property-market in itself is a considerable business.

Though they be not as a rule concerned with worldly things like parcels, the angels have plenty of work, for their services are in wide request. "Poor Peggy," said someone a while

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back, "out in the dark by herself." "She's all right," said Guy with confidence, "she's got her angel." Peggy is the donkey. If an angel is concerned with her welfare, moral as well as physical, he has his work cut out. For Peggy, though not without her good points, is of an obstinacy! And she will reduce a rose tree to bare bones in the twinkling of an eye, when she can get at it. And she knows how to get through the wire fence that separates her paddock from the garden.

There is one of our experiences that must be related without comment. Indeed comment would be impossible. Guy was just turned five when he became possessed of a magic carpet—or, perhaps it should be said, when he endowed the little black hearthrug in the drawing-room with the necessary magic properties. He went for his first excursion thereon, in due course returned, and related his experiences to his Aunt Victoria. "I went as high as anything," he explained. Enquiry showed that this meant higher than the birds,

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higher than the aeroplanes, higher even than the fleecy clouds. "I went," he said, "as high as God's house." And then he concluded with a certain emphasis, "I *saw* Him."

### XIII

#### BREAD AND CIRCUSES

WE are all gone to the Peace, as we have agreed to call it in our trouble-saving manner—no, not all, for Poggin has stayed at home with the Controller. It was feared that were he confronted with people in throngs and food in heaps, Poggin's self-possession would forsake him and so he might behave in a manner which after-reflection would find regrettable. He passes, therefore, a secluded afternoon.

But the rest of us are gone to the Peace in our best attire. Penelope's new blue coat is a feature of the celebrations, as was expected. There is not very much of it, it is true, but it compels respect. Even Penelope agreed that it would be well to walk with decorum for fear of motor cars. "I mustn't be killed, not in my new coat," she admitted. Guy in honour



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of his new grey flannel suit has agreed to doff his braces for the time being. The trouble with him has been the acquisition of a fine belt with a silver snake in its buckle before he had quite got used to the novelty of braces. And so for a week or more he has worn both, much doubtless to the better sustentation of knickerbockers, but somewhat also to the amusement of beholders. Mrs. Grundy herself could suggest nothing more rigorous. For the Peace he has at last been persuaded that a belt will suffice. A carefully unstudied opening of the coat will, he anticipates, bring the silver snake buckle into prominence. If necessary he can say to Penelope in a well-modulated aside, "I didn't want a belt *and* braces." Then strangers will know that this quiet style of dressing is a matter of choice, not of necessity.

The Peace, now that we are arrived and can survey it, is a wonderful function. It were impossible in mere words of description to do justice to its many excitements. Figure to yourself the Squire's house, its big pillared

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porch gay with flags, its long coping triumphant with crimson bunting. "What a *lovely* house," exclaims Guy in reverent admiration. And then having traversed the broad gravel sweep and turned the corner you come upon a great concourse of long tables, a mighty mustering of chairs and benches, a dazzling of white napery, a glinting of forks. The big verandah is arranged to seat a great company, and overflow tables stretch away over the lawn too. "Oh," murmurs Penelope, "are we going to have tea *now*?" But busy ladies pay no attention to Penelope. They hurry hither and thither with plates and cups and jugs. And in the foreground are great washing baskets which hold more Cake than we imagined possible. Cake for four hundred! And a bit over! What wonder that we look back over our shoulders as we are towed reluctantly towards the stadium. We should like to play at Samson this afternoon, the contents of the washing baskets being the Philistines.

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But there is much to be done ere tea-time and our minds are soon diverted by spectacles. To the right as you enter the park below the terrace is an eager crowd round an enclosure. We hurry up to see. Behold a set of ninepins almost big enough for giants, and men, aye and women too, who in quick succession bowl at them with big wooden balls. One after another the competitors enter the lists. But the ninepins bear a charmed life, and seldom does one of them fall. Never do more than three lie prone after a bowler has had three shots at them. This is a very subtle game, for you have to hit the first pin so that it collides with the second, which bumps into two more. They in their turn, sprawling, carry instability afield until the collapse is complete. It seems incredible, but wise onlookers assert that a well-practised bowler has been known to knock all nine pins down with a single ball. If that does not happen today it will not be for lack of effort. Somewhere in a generous sty not far away grunts a fine young porker who is to

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reward the best score of the competition. And so there is a constant stream of bowlers, who bowl on determinedly no matter what attractions there may be going on in the other enclosures.

These are solid enough, at two shillings, or a shilling, or a knife, or a bag—acquisitions very comfortable to boys and girls. And for the spectators there is much honest mirth. At this instant when we reach the end of the long course, which is delimited with posts and ropes, there is to be seen a row of bulging sacks arranged in a line across it some fifty yards away. Suddenly a handkerchief waves, a voice cries, “Off with you,” and the sacks begin to struggle into an upright posture. From the mouth of each emerges a head wearing a broad grin, a frown of determination or a fixed glare, as the case may be. And then the sacks start on their mad career. This way and that they fall. They struggle in heaps. They rise to fall again. One, in despair of perpendicularity, essays rolling in

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dignified fashion towards the goal. But one speeds marvellously forward on shuffling toes. So might the waterspout move over the swelling sea, or the young lady traverse the Mall in the days of hobble skirts. We wipe away the tears of laughter and hold our breath. For close behind the shuffling sack comes one which leaps and bounds as if it had been a kangaroo.

Here is a contest indeed. The struggling heaps behind are forgotten in this march of intellect, for it is no less. "Go it, Tommy," we yell, "Keep it up, Bert." And then, alas, the sack called Tommy totters, sways, and spreads its length on the ground, and the sack called Bert catches the infection of uncertainty and sprawls likewise. So we let our breath go and laugh painfully some more. The race goes to a dark horse who has been progressing so cautiously as to be almost unnoticed along the right wing. 'Twas ever thus. Sympathy goes out to the sturdy sack which has rolled full forty yards, and which might have gained

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third place but for being brought up short by the tumbling match of Tommy and Bert which occupies good yards of course. When just as you are balanced another sack hurtles blindly into you, naturally you have a tumbling match. And it is perhaps most unfortunate for a party who rolls into the middle of it. By the time the scene is over our ribs ache with appreciation.

No other race perhaps quite comes up to the sack race in the popular eye, but there are others nearly as exciting. The three-legged race, for instance, in which pairs of boys are yoked together by the ankles, or the wheelbarrow race in which the barrow has to progress on its hands while the driver holds its feet—these be worthy contests not without those mishaps which are the salt of a spectacle. Then there is an event in which the competitors have to collect potatoes one at a time from different distances. It goes to the first who can show six placed well and truly in a little heap. Some unfortunates lose their last

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potato and may be seen wandering dolorously about searching for it. Can it be that some miscreant has picked up a brace at once for the better furnishing of his heap? The umpires have to keep their eyes well open in this event.

There are races for girls as well as boys, one of them being a needle and thread race. In this the damsels have to run to a given spot, thread a needle there, and then run back to the winning post. The one who sticks the needle into the umpire first wins—at least that is how it appears to the umpire when the line of Amazons gallops down upon him. Another popular event is the egg race, in which each girl has to carry a china egg in a wooden spoon for fifty yards. Very shallow and insufficient are the spoons, and all the eggs leap about on the grass, whence they must be retrieved without the help of fingers. Slow-and-sure wins this race, for an egg once dropped cannot be easily picked up by an excited person. A maiden who trots

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along very sedately and does not drop the egg at all need not fear the more showy racer who starts off very fast and then spends many seconds among bunkers. On the whole the girls make just as good a show as the boys. If they do not perhaps run quite so fast they display a good deal of subtlety in coping with difficulties and interpreting rules, as was to be expected.

The weather causes us uneasiness ere the children's sports are far advanced. Heavy clouds roll up and presently melt into showers. It develops into a "droppy" afternoon, and it either rains or looks as though it were just about to rain all the time. But that does not greatly interfere with enjoyment, and it diminishes in no wise the enthusiasm with which presently we all troop up to the verandah and take our places at those long well-spread tables. Two of us, in particular, sit as close as may be to those wonderful washing baskets and that unlimited store of cake.

This is the children's hour, for the grown-



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ups are to have their tea afterwards, and a crowded hour it is, in every sense of the word. Each guest has brought his or her mug—Guy has Ship-a-Sailing and Penelope Hen-a-Laying, so named from the pictures that adorn their sides—and tea is poured into every mug from great urns at the ends of the tables. For food there is sensible bread-and-butter, 6 in. x 6 in. x  $\frac{3}{4}$  in., there are sandwiches made with green jam and sandwiches made with red jam, and lastly there is that noble display of cake, white for the small guests, currant-speckled for the bigger. It is a great feasting.

So far as can be seen Guy and Penelope are doing full justice to each of the viands in turn, and the only thing to distinguish them from their neighbours is that Guy has retained his hat. (It turns out later that he insisted on this as compensation for the missing braces). As the only be-hatted little boy at his table he is a trifle conspicuous, but he does not seem to mind.

The tea more or less bears out the theory

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that capacity is in inverse ratio to size. Alfred, who looks a doubtful three, eats twice as much as nine-year-old Jane who sits next him. And Marjorie, who is a probable two, is a full piece of cake up on Alfred. A well-matured little person is Marjorie, able to say "pease" when invited to eat some more, clear about the greater attractiveness of red jam, and fully aware that an appealing manner is worth an extra lump of sugar in the mug. Also, when urged thereto by her family, Marjorie will even go so far as to say "fank oo." It is very nearly one person's job keeping Marjorie supplied. Or perhaps the way that she has with her makes it seem so.

James Arthur is a more difficult subject than Marjorie, although he is some months older. "Now James Arthur," we say heartily, "what shall we have next?"

"Wow," replies James Arthur, or something like that.

"What did you say? Cake?"

"Ur."

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"Which? Red Jam?"

"Ee."

"Here, Cissie, I can't make out what he wants. What is it?"

"Please, sir, he wants some more sugar in his tea."

Wonderful is feminine perception. How Cissie divined James Arthur's requirements from his utterances, accurately recorded, it is impossible to say. But she is quite right. Another lump of sugar causes James Arthur to beam with content, and this settled he has leisure to think of cake as well. And the intelligent Cissie is rewarded with red jam.

There is, so far as observation goes, only one tragedy to mar the festival. Henry, a youth of James Arthur's age and size, after sitting lack-lustre for a space, bursts into wailing. He is removed by his sister Ethel, who explains the trouble. Henry is, she explains, full to the top button and he cannot manage another mouthful. And some cruelly kind person has put a large new slice of cake on his plate! Who

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wouldn't wail in such circumstances? We understand and sympathise. Perhaps, if Henry takes a bit of a walk, and then comes back, he may find that he can do a bit more after all. We hope for the best.

When all the children have reached the top-button stage they troop off with their mugs to the park and there is a great washing-up of plates and re-laying of tables. And then the grown-ups assemble for their tea, a more solid meal fortified with plates of goodly ham. This over, the festivities begin again and there are races for old men and young men, for married ladies and marriageable daughters, for everyone in fact. The most popular victory perhaps is in the fifty-yard handicap for men over fifty. The competitors have assembled, ten or a dozen hearty fellows on the right side of sixty, when there totters along to the starting point the venerable figure of Granfer Gubbings, who, it is said, is as near eighty as makes no difference. When the crowd understands that Granfer proposes to compete it roars applause.

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The handicappers get to work and presently one of them comes along and deposits Granfer at his station, a good twenty yards in front of anyone else. Even so, how shall so ancient a man hope to stay the course, with middle-age thundering at his heels! He has much ado even to walk to his place, let alone run. But Granfer pays no attention to the pitying comments of the onlookers. Slowly and methodically he removes coat and waistcoat, and hands them to a proud grandson. Then he takes off his hat, and awaits the starting signal. It comes, and the runners are off. Gallantly the middle-aged men strive neck and neck and it is a thoroughly well contested race. There is hardly anything in it between Tom Harrison and Charlie Naggs, and only by a desperate spurt does Tom end up a yard in front, so qualifying for second place. As for first place, Granfer Gubbings made sure of that some time ago. The old man simply "romped home," as the descriptive writers say, and the rest were nowhere. Granfer Gubbings

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going to the starting point and Granfer Gubbings racing for a first prize of ten shillings are strikingly different people. It is a greatly applauded victory, but next time it is likely that Granfer will have to start somewhere near scratch.

It would need the pen of a Pindar to do justice to the other features of the sports, the quarter-mile won by a man over forty, the all-fours race with its desperate feats of agility, the ladies' events nearly all won by a slim young Atalanta in black whose grace of motion captured all hearts except those of some of the older ladies, the fifty-yard handicap for married ladies which produced six winners, to the great disturbance of the umpires before whom the claims were shrilly laid, the stroke of genius which suggested the allotting of six uncut cakes, overplus from tea, in settlement of these claims. There were great tugs-of-war in which North End pulled over not only South End but also the Estate, and in which the Married Ladies were too powerful for the

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youthful team captained by Atalanta, a turning of tables which held a certain poetic justice.

What can be said of the admirable pillow-fighting in which sturdy champions sat astride a bar and banged away at each other with sacks plumped out with hay? We laughed more than a little to see. But when the blindfold boxing came on we laughed till we could laugh no more. And some of us paid the penalty, for the blindfolded heroes, robbed by circumstance of their proper prey, usually found their way to the ring and pummelled the spectators who pressed against it to a chorus of hearty approval from everyone who was out of reach. Justice cannot be done to all these joyous features of the afternoon. Suffice it to say that we had a happy time and went home babbling of wonders, if rather tired.

And we can rest afterwards. As Guy says, "Now Peace is over we shall have time to go fishing."

## XIV

### THE SCAVENGERS

WE have been meditating on the vanity of human effort. Some time ago there was a concerted movement on the part of the Powers that Ought to Be towards living a less muddled life. For example, there was a vast accumulation of numbers of a highly respectable but somewhat bulky weekly journal, which, so to say, blocked every avenue of progress. It was decided, therefore, to cut out such features as might be wanted for future reference and to "scrap" the rest. A similar procedure was decided on for other odd papers, pamphlets, circulars, and similar reading matter.

And forthwith the work began. Then Guy and Penelope arrived with loud cries of enthusiasm, and hurled themselves into the fray. "Oh, the pictures!" they shouted. And



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it was:—Might they have this? Did anyone want that? Was the other really marked for abolition? And we became aware that Teddy, Cassandra and other friends had pronounced artistic tastes for which there was now unexpected chance of satisfaction. So there was a busy scene, the Powers that Ought to Be filling waste paper baskets, Guy and Penelope analysing them and making selections at their pleasure, either with busy fingers or blunt scissors. It was all very pleasant because the analysts proved usually willing to help. Their selections made, they cheerfully carried the full waste paper baskets away into outer darkness and came back for more. The clearance rapidly seemed satisfactory and complete.

It was some days later that the flaw in the arrangement became manifest, and the nature of the discovery was this: The door of the toy-cupboard in the nursery, always a hard-worked and ill-treated portal, suddenly burst open as from an intolerable strain and out

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on to the nursery floor poured an avalanche of *abiblia*, which, as readers of Charles Lamb know, are forms of literature that a gentleman can be without. In this case the conglomeration consisted of everything that had been thrown away so toilsomely at the recent clearance. Guy explained with perfect *sang froid* that naturally they had not been able to cut out or tear out all the things they wanted in the limited time at their disposal. He anticipated that this would take "ever so long." It may be recorded that Mr. Nobody came to the assistance of a harassed household in this emergency, and the toy-cupboard was pretty well cleared out while men slept. He was a good deal blamed, but it is difficult to get "upsides" with Mr. Nobody.

Since that abortive tidying it has been really very difficult to get rid of rubbish. Every waste paper basket is liable to the strictest scrutiny and its contents are rigorously overhauled, anything of possible value being removed to the dump of the moment.

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An unlovely heap of envelopes, cardboard, tin and rag at the corner of one of the rosebeds is such a dump. "Oh, *that!*" says Guy, "we've been playing shop." His tone implies gross stupidity in the questioner. Any fool would surely have known that commerce is an affair of heaps, which accumulate in picturesque confusion till the transport strike may be over. "*I'm* the shop-lady," adds Penelope, "an' it's no good your asking 'cos we haven't got none. An' we shan't have I don't know when," she concludes triumphantly. Penelope's experience of shops has of course been gained since they were turned into sub-departments of State with full powers. She becomes a trifle over-bearing as a shop-lady.

Guy, a little more advanced in knowledge, makes a good after-the-war shop-man. "Everything has went up horrible," he declares. "This will be sixpence now." Only a constitutional feebleness in the mathematics prevents his exacting ten times the old price. The right spirit of endeavour is there. So too

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is the needed clearness of vision. "Tomorrow it will have went up more, and it will be two sixpences." One has to look ahead in affairs.

It seems possible that if things go on as they have begun it will in the future be quite a feasible thing to combine the dignity and emoluments of keeping a shop with the moderately fresh air and the freedom of the fine old profession of scavenging which you carry on in dust heaps, street kennels, and other well-furnished places. To spend Monday collecting your stock with a stick which has a sharp nail at its end, and to repose yourself in a chair behind a counter all Tuesday while you sell each item of rag or paper or whatever it may be for "two sixpences"—that would surely be a brave way of living. Guy and Penelope if they remain in their present frame of mind will almost certainly take to it, provided that they find openings, or that there is anything left to pick up by then—that seems the chief danger. This problem of production may of course

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have a marked effect on dust heaps. The hats and boots that once rewarded collectors are already becoming hard to find; presumably they stay on heads and feet. We can vouch for several of them personally.

There is, for example, Poggin's garden hat. At the moment, it is true, it lies among the leaf-mould, if our eyes do not deceive us, but it will not stay there. In due course it will be retrieved and replaced on Poggin's head. Fortunately he is not aware that it formerly protected Guy from the sun, nor does he know what a hard time it had later in trying to perform a like service for Penelope, to whom a hat is as a rule an encumbrance, and he cannot be aware that such hats in the happy old days would have been often found on dust heaps. So he wears the thing without special protest. And he will no doubt go on wearing it so long as his head will go into it or until its brim falls off, after which it will probably only serve as two drawing-room ornaments or an offering for a bazaar. By that time another hat will

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descend to him by the law of entail. Penelope also is provided for. Guy may find himself in difficulties unless his head grows a good deal. The felt hats on the hall pegs are too big for him at present. But they are good lasting hats. One, which was retrieved from the lumber attic, must already have weathered a dozen years or more, and it is quite capable of another decade without disintegration.

The King's highway furnishes certain opportunities for scavenging, and here Penelope is more active than Guy, who sometimes adopts a virtuous manner. "You oughtn't to pick that up," he will say. "You don't know *who's* had it." Which is, of course, a very just observation. But it does not influence Penelope much, except to make her less open in her doings. When she wishes to gather old matches, buttons, hairpins, paper bags, or what not, she now adopts a subterfuge, dropping behind with her miniature perambulator and using it as a dustcart. But if the Director of the large perambulator, in which

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Poggin rides, looks round over a shoulder with intent to upbraid, then is seen the absurd spectacle of Penelope also looking round over her shoulder at an imaginary defaulter still further behind, while a shrill voice scolds thus: "*Will* you come on? Come on this minute. If you don't come on we shall go on and leave you." It is difficult to know how to act in such circumstances.

Latterly the scavenging business has been intensified by the acquisition of the art of sewing. Guy has accomplished twenty full stitches, and Penelope about sixteen, and they have only been at it for a few days. But there has been a great assembling of material, odds and ends of ribbons, fabrics, rags, and so on, for the first needle was threaded just before a new tidying-up-of what is called the "piece cupboard"—was started. Naturally the sewers made a point of being present, and they suffered nothing to escape them which could possibly be associated with needle and cotton. And a new form of dump has come

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into being. Sometimes you will find it in an armchair under a cushion, sometimes on one of the stairs, sometimes in a soup-tureen on the kitchen dresser. There is no set rule for dumps.

Poggin has his scavenging instincts also, but he does not carry things quite so far as do the others. He picks things up—he will pick *anything* up from a squashed snail to a cast horseshoe, but fortunately he sets no permanent store by them. So if he has scavenged too shamelessly, all that is necessary is to divert his attention to something else, a half-brick, for instance, or any other relatively harmless matter which needs two hands in lifting and carrying. In the last resort an apple makes a sure diversion, and now that they are getting pretty ripe they can be used with more confidence.

It is a grave question, and worth considering by a conference of Powers, how far it is necessary to keep a nursery supplied with toys of sumptuous construction and elaborate designs,



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at any rate while the occupants of the nursery are still quite small. Guy and Penelope now have some appreciation of species in toys, but for a long time they only classified them generally into Orders, as does the higher Natural History. These were three: Soft toys, hard toys, and broken toys, the third naturally including the genera, breakable, tearable and bendable. The hard toys were few in number, and Mr. Equal, celebrated heretofore, was chief among them. Nothing—it has been proved—could break Mr. Equal. Besides toys, however, the world contained many admirable things which were of perpetual interest, the things which you scavenge for yourself, and these were just as good for whiling away shining hours as effigies of men, animals, or machines. As it was with Guy and Penelope, so it is now with Poggin. He carries Fluffy Dog No. 2 about with him a good deal, it is true, but that is merely the natural craving for an armful. For solid amusement give him a paper bag, a piece of

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coal, and a bit of stick, or possibly a pile of those novels that have risen by twopenny stages from seven pence to two shillings. They afford pleasant entertainment as personal luggage, especially the slippery ones, which are perpetually sliding out of one's arms on to the floor.

It seems as though the love of toys, as such, were an artificial growth, stimulated by the simple pleasure which the Powers that Are take in them. Primarily childhood is not interested in toys but in *things*, as an old shoe, a cardboard box, a cigarette case, and so on. These give imagination scope and stimulate ingenuity. Also, it may be, they are a reminder that life is real and earnest, which is no doubt useful when one feels like that. The Powers that Are, on the other hand, are for the most part blasé about *things* but fascinated by toys, which to them are a reminder that life need not be wholly real and earnest. That is largely why toy-merchants flourish and why uncles bring such large parcels.

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Childhood's corrective for this anomalous state of affairs is possibly a sound one, to reduce the unduly elaborate and expensive toys as soon as possible to the status of things. Take, for instance, "Nore's Ark," as we call it. Nore and his company are scattered to the four winds—a trunkless elephant or a legless zebra might be encountered almost anywhere in the garden—but the ark, lacking its roof and stern, makes a tolerable receptacle for acorns or chestnuts and is in high esteem. Similarly the miniature tennis racket, never having smitten its shuttlecock save experimentally before presentation, having lost its head and become unrecognisable, is now one of Poggin's favourite weapons for banging the floor or hitting table legs or what not. But even that appeals to him less than the bit of iron piping which he found in the garden and carries about with him whenever opportunity offers.

In connection with this short way with too elaborate toys it is interesting to record that there are scavengers outside the home circle.

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A collection was recently made consisting of a doll's leg, a horse's mane, the handle of a wooden spade and so on. Guy and Penelope were very busy about it, and a good deal exercised as to what could and could not be spared for it. In the end it was not very considerable because not a little property had to be "referred back" for further consideration. Eventually, however, a small heap of debris was finally approved and placed in the spare-room grate "to wait till called for." It appeared that the person who was going to call for it was "Mr. Nobody's little boy," worthy son of a busy sire. He called. Anyhow the heap vanished.

A recent incident shows how toys are subordinated to more serious things. "What are you going to do this wet afternoon?" asked the Controller. "Oh," said Guy, "we're going to have a Peace in the nursery. We're going to put all the soft toys to stand in a row for a race. And Penny and I are going to stand at the side and laugh." Now, none of the kind donors

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of the said soft toys, Japanese Monkey, Herbert, Fluffy Dog No. 2, Big Teddy, Old Teddy, and so on, would ever have thought of such a fate for their gifts. "Butchered to make a Roman holiday!"

## XV

### PRIVATE FISHERY

OF all the unlikely places—and yet perhaps not so unlikely after all. For in this land of waters you might meet with sport almost anywhere, even out in the fields if you chose to angle at large when the floods come, as they are pretty sure to do some when between January and March. In front of us is a river, to right and left of us is a canal. At the back of us is another river. Eastwards is a big lake, westwards a series of fish ponds. Everywhere are streams and ditches more or less filled with water and inhabited by fish.

But Guy's fishery is the least of them all. Where the road rises to cross the railway there are two culverts, one on each side of the wooden steps at the end of the walk by which we get out of the garden. That on the left is quite considerable, carrying back to the river

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a tolerable stream maybe six feet wide and a foot deep. Doubtless there are good fishes in that stream, for the dace will work up early in the year and some probably stay there all the summer. If Guy had made this his preserve there would be no cause for surprise. But it is the other culvert which attracts him, a mere trifle of a pipe eighteen inches wide, with the water (in these days of drought) coming to a dead end a few feet below it. Just at the culvert's mouth is a yard of fishable water six inches deep. "Fishing? *There?*" was the natural comment when the project was first mooted.

"Yes, there, certainly," was the reply, and so tempting was the description of the sport, so vivid the account of fishes seen, so real the three-inch dace, the minnow, and the two sticklebacks in the jam jar, that it was then and there decided to make a party of pleasure and to invite the catcher of chubs thereto, on condition that he provide tackle and do all that was necessary about worms.

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This angling is a curious madness. Why it comes over some and spares others it is hard to say, but it is probable that those who are spared have never sat with goggling eyes and bated breath watching a live fish in the clear water approach the suspended worm and poise itself in doubt before it. The yearning then is simply fearful, and if the fish, having doubted enough, turns away, the impulse to be down and at it with a net is almost irresistible.

The party of pleasure sits on the brick wall of the culvert and looks down with greedy eyes. In full view there are three minnows and five sticklebacks, while a stickleback tweeks the end of the First Angler's worm, but it will not come to serious grips with it. Serious grips with a stickleback means a slow laborious swallowing of half a worm. Then all the angler has to do is to lift the line steadily from the water and the stickleback comes with it. For he is in the ridiculous position of having filled himself so full that he cannot part with



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his prey and he therefore has to hang on despite himself. To-day, however, no stickle-back shows genuine interest.

"Guy, you're frightening them," says the First Angler. Indeed Guy's lure *is* leaping up and down in the water in an agitated manner. Doubtless good Father Walton knew how difficult it is to keep the point of one's pea-stick quiet and steady when one is awfully anxious to catch a fish. Probably his Scholar did much the same sort of thing when he watched the chub with a white spot on its tail. If your fish won't come to the worm, make the worm pursue the fish—that is a very natural and pardonable theory, even if it does not succeed.

"There were *much* bigger ones," says the First Angler, "like that one we caught. And spotted ones too." And Guy is persuaded to lay his pea-stick down so that the little red worm may lie temptingly on the bottom. Then, perhaps, from under the arch . . .

"Look, did you see *that*?" Yes, indeed, we

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all saw. It was like a giant among the minnows, but it went back under the arch at once. "*That* was a spotted one. Oh, and there's one of the others, two, three—Guy, *leave* your rod alone. Of *course* they won't take it if you jump it about. You've frightened them away again."

Even as this complaint is made, there is a scurry under the arch, out dashes a fish, seizes the First Angler's worm, and in a moment is flying up into the middle air, its scales flashing in the sunlight as it goes. "Let me see. May I put it in the bottle. What is it? Isn't it a nice fish? Is it as big as the one we got yesterday? Can I catch one too? Shall we put it in the tank?" Never did a three-inch dace cause a greater volume of talk. Guy has to discuss the affair from every aspect, and to pick the creature out of its jam jar three times before he feels that the incident is closed. Then we all go back to our fishing.

There is an interval of peace and quiet.

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And then, "Oh, I've got one." Guy positively squeals with excitement. But, alas, he has been too precipitate. The stickleback has no more than got the end of the worm into its mouth and it falls back with a tiny splash. "Oh, I want the net. *Please* let me catch it with the net. I *do* want to catch it."

The shrimp net is there for emergencies, but not for mere revenge like this. "No, you'd only disturb the water. You wait a bit, and you'll catch something better than the stickleback in a minute."

"Shall I catch one like yours?" He is assured that he will if he displays the proper angler's patience. And so we dispose ourselves to wait again with our eyes earnestly on the mouth of the culvert

It is a glorious day. The sun pours down upon us and the bricks on which we sit are warm to the hand. The air is full of the humming of insects and the chirp of grasshoppers in the long grass of the bank. A robin has hopped on to the stile to see what we

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are doing and to find out if there is anything to his advantage in it. Just beyond the hedge there is a steady munching, most comfortable of sounds. The great cart horses in the field have drawn up to the shade to continue their dinner. They are company for the lonely party of fishers, or they would be if needed.

But they are not needed, for see, where a whole troop of fishes comes out from the arch, several like the one in the bottle and three spotted ones. Now for it! These be tense moments as all the fishes swim about the two worms, now seeming to notice them, now apparently ignoring them. The minnows and sticklebacks have given way before their betters and are gone into the weeds below. The great ones have the pool all to themselves. But they do not bite, unhappily, and presently they are again vanished, and nothing done.

This is a bad business. We are annoyed. Who ever before saw so many fish and two worms and no bites? It is not to be borne. Let us—but no, the culvert goes right under

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the road, and the handle of the shrimp net is only four feet long. It would be useless to scoop, for the fishes would simply swim out of reach. Let us rather try another dodge. Now, see that fly on the brick. Advance a hand very cautiously behind him, now a quick dashing encirclement—so. Pinch him for pity's sake, and let us put him on the hook instead of the worm. Now let him down till he rests on the surface of the water, and wait. Here come all the fishes again, and at once there is a bold swirl, the fly has vanished, and behold another silvery inmate for the jam jar. It is great medicine, as we anglers say, this dibbling with a fly.

But it cannot always be administered. For the life of us we cannot catch another fly, and we have to rebait with a worm, a little wriggly pink one this time. It serves though. Hardly is it on the bottom when out comes the biggest of all the company of fishes and is gone with it under the arch. But not for long. The First Angler grasps the pea-stick with

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both hands, tightens lips, and pulls. And so there is another fish for the bottle, the greatest yet. "Is that a gudgeon? What's a gudgeon? Is it bigger than a dace? It's all blue and silver. Can I have it in my hand?" Guy celebrates this great capture in his accustomed manner. Truly it is worth celebrating, for the gudgeon measures four inches, no less.

After this there is another spell of idleness. The fishes come out as before from time to time, but they seem uneasy in their minds. Perhaps they miss their late companions. Anyhow they take no notice of either of the worms. Fishing begins to seem a slow business. It feels as though it must be getting on for tea-time.

"It *can't* be tea-time," protests Guy, "till I've caught a fish. You *said* I would catch one."

Here is an awkward situation. It is quite true. There *was* a prophecy. Of all the rash speeches—for if fishing teaches you nothing else it teaches you the unwisdom of being con-

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fident. Why men spend whole weeks at it sometimes and catch nothing at all. There are men who have spent years trying to catch a Thames trout and are still waiting for one to bite. And Guy was promised that he should catch a fish "in a minute." This is a bad business and faces grow long.

Then we are suddenly aroused to interest by strange events in the water. Away under the arch out of sight there is a commotion which results in waves coming out into the pool. And with them come all the fishes in a great hurry. Guy tries to make his worm hurry too, but is persuaded to put the pea-stick down again. The fishes go round the pool and vanish once more. "There's something up in there," is the sage if not very illuminating comment.

All becomes quiet again, and minds are bent on the problem, how to satisfy Guy without a fish. It is clear that none of the company below is willing to oblige. They are all obviously completely out of humour.

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And then, without any warning, there is a fresh excitement. Something incredibly large dashes out from the arch, grabs Guy's worm, and bolts back with it, pulling the point of the pea-stick down as it goes. There is great confusion. We all jump about, and cry aloud, clutch at the pea-stick, give advice, exclaim, pull, heave, and finally exult. For look what we have flouncing before us on the grass. It is a noble perch, with red fins, black stripes, and well armed back. It is seven inches long. It is *much* bigger than the gudgeon. It could *eat* the gudgeon, very nearly. It is almost worth cooking. And Guy has caught it. Didn't we *tell* him he would catch one in a minute? True, we never hoped for quite such a fish as this. It will hardly go into the bottle, except standing on its head. Never mind, there is plenty of room in the tank.

Now, we can go back to tea with complete satisfaction. We have done all that we set out to do. Aye and more also. For from this



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day forward Guy is sealed of the brotherhood of anglers. The madness that came upon him in his sixth year will be with him when he numbers three score and ten. This may be for good or for ill, but the thing is done now.

"I fish very well," observes the angler complacently as he trots along homewards hugging the jam jar.

Fortunately this dangerous form of pride will not last. Some day he will find himself confronted with that curious manifestation "the evening rise," or he will try to cast his fly against a downstream wind, or fish for a carp, or lose a salmon—anyhow he will find out some permanent truths as he goes on, among them the superiority of luck to skill. But it is a sweet madness, *amabilis insania* as the poet has said.

## XVI

### PARTS OF SPEECH

“WILL you feed the chuckins?”

“All right. Where’s the key?”

“In the backer, and the backer’s in the kinney. Take the neggs to Marfer and put the key in the dummum when you is done.”

“Right you are. Afterwards I’ve got to put a nail in for the momper, oil the mowsheen, and look to the waste pipe of the bash.”

Into this “devastating dialogue” as *Punch* might justly call it, intrudes a voice of grave protest. “You *are* talking funny. What’s bash?” And Guy surveys the unfortunate speakers with something of the expression which must distinguish a Master of Lunacy when he is about his business.

The word “unfortunate” is used advisedly, for it is not pleasant to be left behind in the

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march of Progress. Time was when Guy would have understood all those queer words. Time was when he used them himself, being, indeed, their inventor. And now he disclaims them. Nay worse, he does not recognise them as words at all. Even Penelope scorns such a way of talking, while Poggin's few utterances give promise of quite a different convention when he becomes rather more articulate. "Nonkney out nare" (donkey out there) is his most important observation so far, and the phrasing seems to be his own.

And so the old nursery talk survives only on the lips of tradition, as it were, and the nursery folk marvel when they hear it, much as the rest of us would marvel if we were to listen to the uncouth speech of the ancient Picts.

The nursery is pretty precise nowadays. "So this," observed Penelope meditatively, "is er office." She was a member of the party which had gone off to see the new house, and there were business calls to be made first. "Can't office men ever see froo their

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windows?" she enquired. An old-fashioned wire blind happened to shut out the disturbing influences of the busy High Street. "They stand on a chair if they want to," said Guy with ready perception. "I spose they're *let*," she commented with a touch of wistfulness, which was not really justified. It is *dancing* on chairs which invites censure, whether in offices or elsewhere. And no one knows that better than Penelope.

The bulk of our traditional speech is inherited from Guy, who as a pioneer used his tongue very freely and boldly. Considerable clearings had been made in the backwoods of conversation by the time Penelope took up her claim, so the ancient language owes little or nothing to her. In the words of the song, she is notable not so much for what she says as for "the nasty way she says it." For instance, as "the muffin lady" she tries to palm off her wares on a patient world at a shilling apiece. The patient world being afflicted with the new poverty remonstrates at so great expenses.

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“Well,” says the muffin-lady, “you can have these for sixpence. They’re imitation muffins, muffin outside and brick inside.” And you can see that she wishes such niggardly customers a hearty indigestion with each mouthful.

Some of the ancient words still survive, as “huncle” and “happle,” which are used regularly. Where the aspirates came from it would be hard to say, for superfluous aspirates are not a family failing, but they are retained firmly. Indeed, there is perhaps an excuse for them. They seem to add something—to an uncle dignity, to an apple roundness. Huncle Tertius is a much more important person than Uncle Tertius, while a person who bursts into the store-room demanding “a happle,” with every atom of breath in her small body emphasising the desire, is not likely to meet with a stern refusal.

The tribe of uncles came to be emphasised by an odd train of events. When Guy was very small indeed it was decided that he must on no account fall into the common error

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of youth which is to hail every male person met out of doors with a jovial shout of "Daddy." He was carefully taught therefore that all such unattached persons were to receive no more cordial a greeting than "uncle." And he learnt his lesson very well. Many a coal man, many a commissionaire, many a felt-hatted nondescript, has paid a tribute to Guy's infant originality in the shape of a start of surprise. (None of them, perhaps, was more surprised, or more pained, than the immaculate young person from Eton, Harrow or Westminster, whose glossy hat excited Guy's approval. "Baby gentleman"—or syllables to that effect—was his loudly expressed admiration).

This continued for a considerable time, and uncles though unbelievably numerous, remained just uncles, till the morning of the spring cleaning, when the night-nursery was temporarily closed. Guy was put to enjoy his noon slumber in another room. He had not been there long before there was a great wailing and lamentation which echoed through

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the house, and compelled instant attention. The trouble, it appeared, was "all those H-h-h-h-uncles," they murdered sleep. And Guy pointed accusingly at the photogravure reproductions of Rembrandt painted by himself, Napoleon painted by David, and so on—the room contained several portraits of a pervading brownness. The terrors of the moment were soothed away, but uncles have had an asperate ever since.

Aunts are not so distinguished. There is nothing terrifying about aunts. You just gather them in. "You silly," said Penelope to Poggin, who was understood to have attempted to put a name to a lady, "that wasn't Auntie May, that was Auntie Miss Shenkins." Penelope finds it good business to have plenty of aunts, who are useful relations. And of course she cultivates uncles too. "We've got heaps of huncles," she said thoughtfully one day, "but only three fathers, God and Father Christmas and Daddy."

Nursery glossaries would be an interesting

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study, and the student could pursue his researches comfortably at the dining-room table long after the nursery itself has ceased to yield any material worth collecting. For any given parents who are at all susceptible are sure to adopt all the worthier expressions which they overhear. When Poggin, for instance, pointed to Venus low-lying in the West on his first introduction to the inverted bowl of Night, and observed "Pot in ky," it was felt that he had enriched the family vocabulary. "Wonderful show of spots in the sky to-night," is the sort of thing that has resulted from his astronomical discovery. After all, who can take exception to bright spots wherever found?

Some of the new words which are coined in the nursery have a decided picturesqueness of their own. Take "hattie bonno" as an example. This is merely a head-covering, hat, cap, bonnet, what you will. But somehow it calls up images of radiant summer evenings with the hay a-carrying, sunburnt



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arms and necks, pink print dresses, bright cans of steaming tea, and pretty Dolly Varden's face framed in the most charming of sun-bonnets, an article which has the essential spirit of all hats that were ever devised for the undoing of male observers.

Other new words summon pictures of a different kind. When Penelope discoursed of "elephants' husks," we wondered what bizarre notion was in her mind. The shell from which an elephant has been extracted—it is a big conception. It carries one to the South Kensington Museum and the reconstructed mammoth. And thence it is no long journey for the swift mind through the forests of the dawn to the shores of that uncharted ocean wherein life wallowed in its hugest and most hideous form. The Things that were before history began—they have an awful fascination. But Penelope was not thinking of these, it appeared. When she spoke of elephants' husks she meant "their great long teef." Just ivory, in fact. Indeed, one might

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almost say just spillikens, so used is one to the idea of elephants' tusks.

The "dear little baby chaff" was a thing that puzzled us rather for a time. Interchange of amenities or "back chat" between the cots was of course no unknown thing, but a pleased recognition of its infantine charm, a consciousness of the pleasure with which other people would be likely to listen to it, seemed decidedly strange. It turned out, however, that a reference to a little red calf seen in the yard of Furlongs Farm was what was intended.

A farm and its activities are a perpetual stimulus to the tongue of youth and it is to be noted that technical progress does not necessarily make things easier for that tongue. The Other Little Girl in old days in Norfolk used to watch "oxens" pulling the ploughs along. Guy's earlier visions were of "great big gee-gees" which performed the same task. But now Poggin is coming to regard a "moplow" as the customary thing for making

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furrows. All sorts of new "sheens," as most of us call them generically, are beginning to play a part in agriculture, and some of them will take a lot of pronouncing, if not for us, at any rate for other nursery folk in due season.

To the people who are not really nursery folk, save by adoption, the trouble is not so much the coming of new things as the passing of old ones. When you have got used to that excellent fruit the "ododge," you will find its taste less admirable if you have to call it "orange." That useful utensil the wheelbarrow will lose much of its title to esteem when you are no longer able to refer to it as a "weelwow." Accustomed to declare briskly, in regard to your hot bath, that the "momper says hunno-five," how shall you bring yourself to a stilted and laborious statement that the "thermometer makes it one hundred and five?" Why the temperature will have dropped to nearly a hundred before you are through with all those syllables.

The fact is that baby talk has not only

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piquancy but also to a great extent practical utility as well. It takes short cuts to the expression of ideas and short cuts often save a lot of heavy going. We others who have had enough of the heavy going in our time gladly welcome the proffered relief. And then, just as it seems that merry hearts will go all the day, making nothing of stiles or ditches, the babies suddenly part company. Short cuts, they decide, are unscientific. They will try the heavy going instead. And so they take the uphill road, becoming daily more polysyllabic and more frankly ashamed of the incorrect speech that they sometimes hear uttered in their presence. It is one of life's tragedies that this should be so.

And some day those babies will realise it too, when they in their turn find themselves left lonely in the byways uttering quaint sounds that have no meaning.

## XVII

### IN PRAISE OF PENNIES

“GUY hit me wiv a wooden.” Thus Penelope in stern accusation.

Guy contests the accuracy of this. “I was only shaking her and her head slipped against the door.”

“Well, that’s a wooden,” she persists stubbornly.

“Besides she pinched me, because I said she hadn’t tied her shoe proper all by herself. I did most of it.”

“You only put it froo, you beastly boy.”

What the Roman poet called “the accursed hunger after gold” is at the root of this distressing family affair. Not very long ago Guy earned a whole shilling by tying his shoe lace alone and unaided. Ever since Penelope has been seeking to establish her claim to a

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shilling too. But she has not yet succeeded and it tries her temper.

The Powers that Be are quite firm about the conditions. There must be a real bow, not merely a plausible tangle, and no other fingers must have helped to fashion it. Even Penelope's native ingenuity has so far failed to find any way of evading either clause, and Guy's lack of reticence makes it still more difficult for her. Hence the passage brawl which leads, so to say, to police-court proceedings. The case is dismissed with suitable cautions. On the one hand the accused is warned that hitting people with a wooden is liable to be attended with a fine of one shilling. On the other hand the accuser is advised in future to employ fingers in the legitimate business of practising bows rather than in pinching brothers.

"An' now can I have the shillin', please?" she says, when all that is settled. Penelope is nothing if not pertinacious. It is to be feared that she is not unfamiliar with the form-

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ula, "Oh yes, take it and run along," which signifies the capitulation of the absent mind to the forces of reiteration. But in this case there is a principle at stake, to say nothing of the shilling, and she is informed that she shall have it so soon as she has complied with the conditions hereinbefore laid down. After which she retires in good order, murmuring.

Financial interests are a fairly new thing with us, and they date from the opening of the new shop. Before that event money matters were a vague abstraction. Someone had complained about narrow circumstances. "Oh," said Guy, "you should go to Mummy. She can *make* money. She writes on bits of paper and they turn into it." Current speech made light of money. If a thing was not sixpence, it was probably a thousand pounds. There were no subtle gradations of value.

With the opening of the shop, however, many things became clearer. For the new shop lies on the favourite road past the mill and the smithy, and as you go towards the

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church. It is very handy because it sells groceries and even tobacco. So on most days either the morning or the afternoon walk includes the excitement of pulling up the old-fashioned latch, jangling the old-fashioned bell, and having a chat with Mrs. Jones while she does up the necessary parcel.

It is a very nice shop in all ways, but its most delightful feature, of course, is its direct appeal to persons of limited means. It keeps up the good old custom of penn'orths, and you can have them in wood, or tin, or a bag, or a bar, just as you please. Now that penn'orths have become so rare in most establishments Mrs. Jones is considered a public benefactor. And we generally have them in the bag, and they are all gone before we get home.

There are various approved ways of gathering the means for cash dealings with Mrs. Jones. Tying a bow, as already indicated, is one. Accurate interpretation of the face of the clock is another, but this will, like the bow, mean a bonus rather than a steady income.



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And payment is likely to be deferred, because we are still uncertain as to the significance of Roman figures apart from their context, and the movement of clock hands is as yet a mystery.

More certain, if less immediately remunerative, is the payment for useful works, the collection of acorns for the pig, for instance, and the finding of eggs which errant fowls have laid in the wrong places. The value set on this work is a satire on the inverted times in which we live. One day the Controller, casting up a column of household disbursements, was bothered about an odd halfpenny. "I can't get that halfpenny," said she. "*I* know," said Penelope, "if you go out and find er egg, you'll get a halfpenny. Only you mustn't find it where you know it is."

To think of old days when you could buy eggs in open market for twenty a shilling! And now it is worth while paying a halfpenny each for eggs laid by our own poultry. Even the egg which sat plain to view on the

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very threshold of the stable was worth a halfpenny. "It was in a awful dangerous place," said Guy. "Why anyone coming along and not noticing and saying, 'Did you ever see such a beautiful sky?' might have trodden on it." Perhaps he was conscious of a possible weakness in his claim, for the stable is one of the places where, as Penelope says, "you know it is." But an egg half in and half out of forbidden territory is worth claiming as genuinely "trove."

If only the birds would always choose such easy places! Unhappily some of them seem to take a fiendish delight in frustrating the efforts of wage-earners. Two or three fly up into the loft for their egg-laying and emerge clucking sardonically. Guy and Penelope may sometimes be seen standing wistfully at the foot of the tall ladder which is the only means of getting up to the loft unless one has wings. Neither can yet manage more than five rungs without losing nerve. So any eggs that are laid in the loft from day to

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day are retrieved by William as part of his ordinary routine, and, in a manner of speaking, are of profit to nobody, except of course the Powers that Be, who naturally don't count.

Of late the question of weekly pocket-money has been under discussion, and it has been debated between the holders of the purse whether in the modern depreciation of the currency a penny a week is enough for small people to manage on. Such debate naturally invites reminiscence of the good old times when pennies really had some purchasing power.

Why, on one occasion the Other Little Girl found it worth while to lead her smaller brother a good two miles across country so that she might superintend the laying out of his penny. It was very necessary that he should spend it on chocolate cream, not squander it on plain chocolate, as would be his wild impulse if left unadvised. And at five the Other Little Girl much preferred chocolate cream. There were, perhaps, com-

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plications arising out of this adventure, for though the Powers that Used to Be must have grown accustomed to aberrations on the part of the Other Little Girl, they never became quite reconciled to losing her brother. Now, however, memory only retains the impression of chocolate cream well earned and heartily enjoyed.

In the brave old days a penny *was* a coin. It was divisible into definite and quite useful parts. The halfpenny would buy many choice things, and even the farthing had its place in barter. "A farth'n's worth of ast drops" from Mrs. Tuttle's was not to be sneezed at, nor were the two enormous pear-drops which that lady would also give in exchange for the same coin.

Hundreds-and-Thousands—how many of them a farthing would purchase was never ascertained, but a good round number. Then there was a thrilling species of cocoanut-ice of which one could get an appreciable portion with a miniature spoon for the better eating of

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it. Then there were farthing buns, and real toys, tiny guns of bronze, little swords, pick-axes, spades—*cheu Posthume labuntur anni*.

To think that the farthing should now be merely a *façon de parler* in lingerie establishments, a way of uttering the rude word "florin" without shocking feminine susceptibilities! "One-eleven-three"—that is all a farthing comes to now. In the shops which cater for men the farthing has ceased to exist even as a matter of polite intercourse. There if they want to say florin they call it two-and six—and be hanged to you!"

As for the ancient halfpenny, you could tender it in payment, and receive change. What more need be said?

The only cheering thing about the present state of affairs is that quite near the new house—let us whisper it!—we have in this very year of highest prices seen veritable half-penny buns, and, more than that, we have seen marbles, sixteen of them for a penny. Father Christmas, it is understood, before

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his last coming searched London over and could not find a marble anywhere. "Can we go to-morrow?" said Guy when he heard about these discoveries. "Can I have them *now*?" added Penelope. "I bun," put in Poggin, who knows what he wants all right, even if he has some difficulty in expressing his knowledge in speech.

The memory of all the joys that were summed up in the word "penny" has almost decided it that the scale of weekly allowance must now be twopence. And, if things improve a bit, possibly that twopence shall be free of income tax.

## XVIII

### THE LAST WORD

A VOICE: "You're not to come near my Teddy. You're a stranger and he's frightened of strangers."

Another Voice: "No, I'm not a stranger."

A Voice: "Yes, you are."

Voices: "No, I'm not. Yes, you are. No, I'm not. Yes, you are. No, I'm not. Yes, you are. No, I'm not. Yes, you are. No, I'm not . . ."

A Voice: "Well, I wish you were."

We dispute, you see, much as do other people in the great and argumentative world, about the only difference being that we are somewhat terser than our neighbours. Where they are apt to say, "On reviewing the whole circumstances of the case I do not feel that it is incumbent on me to adopt the course of

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action prescribed," we simply observe, "Won't," or maybe "Shan't," as our mood is.

Penelope said "Shan't" at dinner-time yesterday between meat and pudding, and kept up a longish debate by repeating the word at intervals. Meanwhile Guy and Poggin vigorously applied the spoon of merit to the plate of righteousness and the pudding grew rapidly less.

Penelope's negatives were punctuated by tears, for the pudding could hardly hold out against boys of such blameless behaviour if they went on like that, but still she obstinately refused to express sorrow for her misdemeanour.

Guy offered his plate for more. Poggin was but three spoonfuls behind him, and he kept one round eye fixed on the dish. At last it was more than she could endure. "I'm s-s-sorry," she admitted in a choked voice, adding, "but I'm still *awful* angry wiv you." Somehow Penelope always manages to get in the last word. She has a way of making it



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difficult, if not impossible, for the other side to find a profitable observation. On an earlier occasion, also at the dinner-table, she replied to the customary enquiry as to a second helping with the unenlightening sound "Ur."

"And what does 'ur' mean?" said the Dispenser crushingly.

"'Ur,' replied Penelope, "means 'please' and 'please' means you *must* do it." And really when one contemplates Penelope in the attitude of suppliant one comes to see that her interpretation of the word is probably correct.

She does not quite always get the best of it, though. Guy in the capacity of elder brother now and then winds up a discussion finally. Some piece of erroneous activity was being debated and Penelope had stoutly asserted her irresponsibility in the matter. The thing had been done, true, but external pressure had, she was sure, been brought to bear. "No, Penny," said Guy judicially, "that

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wasn't Satan, that was your *own* naughtiness."

Guy can be very overwhelming at times, especially about Penelope. Only the other day he burst in with a tragic countenance. "I've got to tell you something," he exclaimed. "It's one of the worst things that ever happened here." Minds were of course composed to hear the worst, even the death of the new pig. But what had happened was that Penelope had snatched up a cabbage just brought in to the kitchen from the garden, and had run away with it to the rabbit hutch. It was curious that the proceeding should have shocked Guy so deeply. When later in the day he made investigation into the working and parts of the garden tap, and incidentally flooded the precincts, he was mildly surprised at the fuss. "I only undid it," he protested, "and couldn't do it up again." And he seemed to think that the innocent pleasure displayed by Penelope and Poggin as they paddled about in their slippers was a vindi-

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cation of his action. While the efforts of other people to emulate good Dame Partington, who repelled the Atlantic with her broom, frankly amused him.

One method of obtaining the last word which is approved in both the outer and inner world is the propounding of insoluble questions. "What," demands the indignant letter-writer, "can be expected while we have a Government which . . .?" "Whither are we drifting?" clamours the leading article. "Why are things as they are?" meditates the philosopher in his quietly speculative manner. No doubt one can find intelligible sounds of answer with which to escape any imputation of rudeness or lack of interest, but in effect the questioners have said the last word.

It is much the same in the inner world. Listen, for example, to this:

"Don't walk about on that bed, Guy. Come off it. It will stop the seeds coming up."

"What will?"

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"Why, your feet, trampling about like that."

"Why will they?"

"Because they make the ground hard and the seeds can't get through."

"Why will they make the ground hard?"

"Because they squash it down where it has been raked."

"Why was it raked?"

"So that it shouldn't be hard for the seeds to come through."

"Why shouldn't it be hard for them to come through?"

It is likely that the answers begin to grow jejune at about this point. They may even die away at once into a "Because it does," which is equivalent to a casting-up of the eyes and a spreading of the hands that signify acquiescence in defeat. Supposing a mood which goes robustly on with more or less intelligent replies, Guy will pursue his enquiry to any length necessary for his purpose. First, perhaps, he will put a case of himself

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stepping among the seeds on tiptoe. That dealt with, he will outline the possibility of his doing it not only on tiptoe but in his indoor shoes. After some enquiry into the relative properties of indoor and outdoor shoes, and the reasons therefor, he may introduce the problems presented by Penelope or Poggin imagined among the seeds. And so he invites quantitative analysis of the amount of damage done by feet of different sizes. From Poggin he may wander on to the limitless fields of natural history, and demand information as to the tramlings of mice or tomtits. And at any moment he may corner his opponent with a "Why do they?"

He can be unexpected, too, if that is required. The Omniscience of God was being impressed upon him one day, and he pondered awhile. Presently he said, "Does he know what boot-buttons are made of?" It is, in fact, unwise to attempt to speak *ex cathedra* with Guy if such speaking bears in any way upon his personal procedure. In the realms

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of fancy, however, he is less exacting. The fairies, the giants, and such privileged folk, may do anything in reason and no awkward questions asked as to motives or justification.

Sometimes the last word seems to be directed at things in general rather than any particular interlocutor. "I'm Mr. Smith and I'm walking along the High Street. You're Mrs. Smith and you're coming along behind carrying the parcels." This view of matrimony seems strangely critical. Penelope, oddly enough, accepts the implied reproach. But she is very fond of parcels, which may influence her. For on occasion she proves that she is not unmindful of changing values. "I'm a police-lady," she will say, "and you've *got* to." That also is in the nature of a last word, for the time being. Later no doubt it will be, "I'm a Parliament-lady, and you don't say anything, ever." Then we shall know exactly how the world wags.

Another interesting hit at the times was delivered by Guy when the diversion of the

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day was household management. "You're the new maid," he said to his sister. "Are you permanent? No, I don't spose you know what permanent is. You're temperry." And Penelope was well pleased to be temporary. It suits her in all ways. As has before been suggested, she belongs to her age.

Out of the mouths of babes—we have it on good authority whence wisdom comes. And daily the Powers that Be have occasion to marvel at the sure instinct of youth which detects the joint in the harness and looses against it the winged arrow of comment, none the less swift and sharp because it is winged from the feather of innocence. What sluggish minds have these same Powers! Do they ever honestly say "Why?" to themselves, and try to follow it with a genuine "Because?" Do they see anything in the yellowing of the corn, the winter mantle of snow, the glitter of wavelets beneath the sun, more than the operation of certain natural processes for the pleasure of the eye? Are there to them any voices in

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the wind, any whispers in the falling water, or is it just a sound of half-music to be mildly enjoyed and so put away?

Only when the babes, with all knowledge and all experience for their province, begin their earnest enquiry into things as they are do the Powers guiltily remember that things *are* as they are, and not as inert minds have come to regard them, without known cause and without recognisable effect. Sadly perhaps those ashamed Powers call upon Jupiter to bring back the past years when there was zest in knowing and joy in absorbing facts. "Did you *know* . . ." Guy will begin, breathless with some discovery, a strange fact imparted by William, a new nest in the ivy, an early violet under the south wall, or what not. It is melancholy to think that at times he might add in just reproach, "And do you *care*?" But indeed the Powers do *try* to care now. If they didn't they would be found out.

Poggin has a last word, a word of unexceptional quality. It comes at the end of Grace



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after Meat. The limitations of written language will not permit an exact transcription of what he says. The proper formula is this: "Thank God for my good dinner. Amen. May I get down please?" Poggin, with his eyes shut tight, says in one breath, quite recognisably though with his own inflexions and consonants, "Thank God-dinner-down-please-Amen."

Perhaps he will some day be a bishop.

## XIX

### LIFE AND LETTERS

**H**AVE you ever, dear Reader, assembled your companions, the little skin horse, the woolly hound Gelert, the wooden soldier, the tin lion, and all the rest of them, and straightway gone back to the jungle? The jungle lies beyond the iron fence which separates the rectory garden from the glebe. It is easily entered. You climb over or crawl through the fence, and just lie down flat. Already the tall grasses wave above your head as a passing gust of wind strokes their feathery heads. Already your eyes follow the specks of sunlight as they dance wonderfully in the cool green glades. The underworld of the hay field—if you remember that, you know what life is, or may be, a great adventure story that lasts from sun up till sun down, that traverses vast oceans, climbs high mountains, explores

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trackless forests, and all within a few yards of your own fireside.

Yards, do we say? Why, within a few feet, a few inches. What brave doings are there on that spreading prairie with its patches of low scrub, which people sometimes call the hearth rug! Look you now! See to the west yon cloud of dust, that forms and reforms, broadens and contracts, and ever seems to draw nearer? What make you of it, Jake? And Jake, that silent but efficient Alter Ego of yours, says "Injuns, I calclate." What a thrill lies in that word, what a call to the born warrior! Rapidly you marshal your forces. Seven men only to meet—what? Ever bigger grows the cloud of dust—they must be thirty or forty at the least. Pete must ride to the fort as he never rode before, and bring back every man they can spare. Meanwhile two men to that bluff there, two to the bit of a gulley opposite, and we will stay where we are. A running fight till the supports come up! and then—let the redskins have it! Life!

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Who can lack life while he has a woolly hearth-rug, thirty ordinary marbles, and fifteen of those white ones with stripes that are a match any day for twice their number of dusky foes?

To enjoy life properly you must "think yourself small." In the hay jungle, for instance, a person the same height as the wooden soldier, about four inches, may be esteemed well grown. And he may have heart-quaking moments as he stalks the lion, the great hound with its spiked collar at his side. The other *ferae naturae*, too, become vastly important and interesting. The fabled scorpion of the eastern sands is scarce more formidable than the great earwig which you are almost sure to meet pretty soon. The fierceness of the tropics seems to be given to the many-legged spider or the prowling lady-bird, while if you chance to meet the grim centipede, the loathly wire-worm, or the terrifying devil's coach horse, why, look to the good blade "Snickersnee."

Besides the lesser crawling creatures you

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may chance to meet the great fauna of the country. A roaming field mouse is always a possibility. No formidable enemy this, for all its bulk. It is sleek and gentle as a fallow doe. The sabre-toothed rat would be quite another story, but luckily does not trouble the hayfield much, and is more to be expected among the ricks, where you yourself are usually considerably taller and often armed. But you may quite well meet a serpent, a regular anaconda or a grass snake. And that will give you "the creeps" for certain. Nothing in Nature is more alien than snakes to human adventurers, descended as we all are from simple Adam and guileless Eve.

Besides being able to think himself small, the amateur of life must also be able to "think himself several," or at any rate two. Penelope, we are sure, can think herself a mother's meeting, teacups and all, if occasion demands it. Her prattle may be heard echoing in any solitude and there is so much of it that it cannot be mere duologue. You may be certain

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that what vaguely troubles your ear is not a mere debate between Mrs. Jones and Mrs. Brown. Mrs. Robinson is "chipping in," Mrs. Smith offers observations, Mrs. Tompkins passes a few remarks. And as likely as not every one of them has a little girl with her who also wags an active tongue. Otherwise how could Penelope turn solitude into Babel as she does?

Guy also is a multiple personality at will. Asked once whether he did not at times find prolonged conversations with himself rather tedious to himself, he admitted frankly that there were occasions on which he would sooner have an actual circle of listeners. "But," he added thoughtfully, "it's much worse not talking at all." And so when he is four inches high and going about in his green grocer's shop (very neatly stocked with holly berries, beans, peas and other miniature fruits in their seasons), or building the new house with four bricks, two slates, five bits of wood and a bucketful of sand, or staying at the seaside

beside the little conservatory pond, or working on his allotment (which is planted with twigs of evergreen, and which really does him great credit)—whatever Guy does he manages to avoid that miserable alternative of doing it in silence. And he obviously talks to his other selves.

Occasionally we suspect that those other selves are borrowed from that excellent journal *The Daily Reminder*, which plays a very prominent part in all our lives. We wonder if Cousin Fred (he is, like his creations, thinly disguised for manners' sake) appreciates the very serious effects his work is having up and down the country. You need no introduction, of course, to those immortal Beings, Pickle and Shriek, who daily place 'their unvarnished doings before the public. You know as well as we do how morning by morning Cousin Fred sadly records their extremely varied activities. What you do not know, perhaps, is the eagerness with which a host of admirers follows the record.

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“What are Pickle and Shriek doing?” is always the first question of the day, and then *The Daily Reminder* is spread out upon the sofa and the scissors are fetched. “Read me what it puts,” is the next observation, when the day’s portion of real history has been safely cut out. Afterwards the drawing is carefully pasted into a book which has been diverted to this purpose.

Now *The Daily Reminder* is an estimable sheet enough, but it is emphatically a thing for To-day only. We shall not want it Tomorrow, and as for next Tuesday, it would be as out-of-date then as an income tax form for the happy year 1913. Therefore when it has been studied and has yielded the day’s portion of mental nourishment it is sent away to perform other works, fire-lighting and so on. We hope to see no more of it. But it appears that the other works are not sufficient to keep it fully employed, and so it has acquired a habit of going into a certain cupboard and there awaiting the day on which a removal or



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some great emergency shall call for many wrappings.

One morning, alas, Guy and Penelope found the cupboard door open, and very soon afterwards *The Daily Reminder* was strewn everywhere. You could hardly set foot to carpet without treading on some cinema star or rather, on her portrait (*The Daily Reminder* is a regular firmament for stars), and the careful accumulation of weeks was in half an hour completely brought to nought. The reason was that one adventure of Pickle and Shriek (possibly the one in which they make treacle pudding in the new top-hat belonging to Cousin Fred's friend, Mr. Seventyman) was thought to be missing from the album. And so the opportunity of searching great heaps of *Daily Reminders* was too good to be neglected. Nor were we rid of back numbers for days. They met us in all our comings and goings, lurked behind easy chairs, floated on every breeze.

But perhaps the most striking testimonial

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to the influence of the paper and its creations was given on the day when some of us went to see the new house. We had walked solemnly round the garden, had explored the kitchen, dining-room, and drawing room, and so found ourselves climbing the stairs which lead to the upper chambers. And presently a door opened and let us into what seemed a very home from home. There lay Teddy, and Herbert, and Chloe and all the rest of our familiar friends, or at any rate their doubles, piled in the familiar heap. There were the little table and the little chairs, there the nine-pins, the bricks, the Japanese fleet—there was everything in fact. And there too were two shrill stranger voices greeting us as we entered. And while one said, "Pickle," the other ejaculated, "Shriek." It would seem that no nursery is now complete without these people.

Of course the world is wide and it holds many other important characters. We meet with new ones almost every day. "You never," said Guy in a tone of some reproach, "told me

about the lady what was turned to a bag of salt." The picturesque metamorphosis of Lot's wife appealed to him perhaps more than to Penelope, who declined to enact the part later unless sugar was substituted for salt, nasty stuff. There was then some discussion as to the orthodoxy of this, but it was finally decided that sugar might pass. "You'll be turned into a bag just the same," said Guy. It was not, however, the bag that deterred Penelope. She would just as soon be a bag of sugar as not.

We meet most of these new characters in the study of the world's literature, of course, a study pursued at secondhand as yet, though Guy begins to have an appreciation of certain combinations of letters now, and promises to surpass the early efforts of the Other Little Girl, who used to interpret *Our Darling's First Spelling Book* by the light of pure reason rather than by the rules of language. "T—E—N" would spell out the instructress ingratiatingly, "what is that?" "Plates," would answer

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the Other Little Girl with her eyes on the picture. And, indeed, the picture did display plates, ten of them, with nice blue borders. The instructress would try again with another picture. "R—U—N—what's that?" "Man" would be the unhesitating reply, for the hurrying figure in brown could belong to nothing else. It had a beard. On another page was a figure called "L—A—D" which was too young to be a man. Obviously that was "Boy." Other pictures in that interesting book displayed such things as a chicken which was spelt "H—E—N," a mouse which was spelt "R—A—T," a horse which was spelt "C—O—B." After prolonged debate over each in turn, the instructress was understood to be of the opinion that while the *First Spelling Book* might be well suited to Our Darlings it was not intended for the Other Little Girl.

Most favoured of all books, perhaps, is that wonderful *Shock-Headed Peter* with its series of tragic histories. "And so, and so," Penelope

will relate breathlessly, "Mummy and nurse went out, and there was matches, and the pussies said not to, and Harriet said yes, she would, and they crackled so, and mummy did it, and the pussies said, 'Miaow,' and she did, and she ran about, and the pussies said, 'You will be burnt,' and it looked so pretty, and the pussies—no that's wrong—and so, and so, she did, and it caught her apron string, and her frock and her arms and nose, and the pussies said 'Miaow,' and cried like anyfing, and she was burnt, poor little fing, and serve her right." The virtuous tone of her conclusion implies that under no circumstances would Penelope fall into Harriet's error. But she once spoilt the effect by observing thoughtfully, "*I* wouldn't let it catch my apron string. *I'd* let it catch the pussies' tails instead." (Perhaps there *is* a certain smug rectitude about those cats which invites retaliation!)

Moreover it is on record that Penelope *has* in her time fallen into Harriet's error. Guy

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hurried, glad and excited, into the dining-room, saying, "Penny's lit the night-nursery." His observation failed to attract notice somehow, owing to other conversation, so he reiterated the statement. "She *has* lit the night-nursery. But," he added consolingly, "she can't go on because there isn't no more matches." And it proved later that there was a considerable hole in the night-nursery carpet. She was younger then, though.

Tall Agrippa and the Red-Legged Scissor-man are, of course, greatly respected. They personify two of the most awe-inspiring conceptions in the human economy, Justice and Punishment. Agrippa's hat and the Scissor-man's twinkling legs add enormously to the effect. Penelope's habit of thumb-sucking is gradually yielding to that influence. She tried to propound a theory that the Scissor-man, being chivalrous at heart, would not do anything to little girls, whatever he might do to boys. But she now knows that he has a wife named Mrs. Crabtree, who is capable

of dealing with any number of little girls, and who also has very sharp scissors.

Experience on the whole, however, shows that one book is practically as good as another book to engross the mind. There had been a nursery tidying, one of the periodical movings of mountains which the Powers that Be have to undertake and which always result in interesting finds. "Yes, and do you *know*," said Guy, "we *thought* we had that lovely book, *The Flying Pig*, and it was under all the soft toys and the stamp album and the pram cushions, and the lovely Moses book was there too." Guy and Penelope will listen with equal zest to the adventures of the aforesaid flying pig, to the story of Moses among the bulrushes (how fortunate was that baby to have a little boat all to himself and to be upon the water at an age when other infants have to mule in cots ashore!), to the fascinating history of Rikki Tikki, or to the drama of Red Riding Hood, with its haunting rhythmic burden of "A home-made cake,

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and a little pat of butter." This line, oft-repeated, gives Riding Hood's story a character of its own, and the strong cake interest is probably responsible for a good deal of the listeners' enthusiasm.

It is curious how often the important part of a story is some minor detail which crops up in it. Johnny Head-in-Air's chief claim to notice seems to be that nice red writing book which went floating away down the river. The student of Johnny's history sees himself or herself going off quietly down stream and waiting with a long stick till a convenient current brings that writing book within reach. And lo! a most treasurable new piece of property. It is well known (after diligent questioning) that Johnny had many not-English stamps, several pictures of Pickle and Shriek, heaps of drawing paper, and red and blue pencils in that writing book.

Or take Robinson Crusoe and his appeal to interest. Is it his lonely state, or his discovery of the footprint, or the coming of Man



Friday, or the battles with the cannibals? No, Robinson is a fascinating figure first and foremost because he is slung about with muskets, and swords, and axes, and next because he amasses so much property from the ship. When we have thrilled properly to the catalogue of Robinson's possessions we can turn to his adventures with zeal, but not before. Aladdin again, what of him? Aladdin is the lucky boy who found heaps of jewels, red rubies, green emeralds, golden topazes, blue sapphires, purple amethysts, and all the rest of them, flashing, glowing, gleaming heaps of delight. They were all round as marbles, and his hands dabbled in them as in softest milk. Aladdin filled a bag with these delicious toys and whenever he felt a bit dull he just sat down on the floor and let them roll out. Doubtless, Aladdin had other preoccupations, but there is no need to tell us more about him. With that bag he is complete.

What is true in regard to literature about the greater appeal made by the part than by

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the whole is no less true in regard to life. A cowslip may colour a day, a nightingale set a night to music. What are the detached memories of some of life's happiest hours when a London child was given the freedom of God's green country? White violets in a high-banked lane, a draught of milk from the foaming pail, a potato roasted in the bonfire, *Uncle Joe's Stories* absorbed by a reader at full length under the mulberry tree, the fish which gleamed silver in the pond, the baby rabbits which huddled in the empty cornbin. "Dripping Cakes" for tea—the crisp sweetness of them lives on though there be never such cakes again. Then there was a concert in the village schoolroom. The refrains of "Mistress Prue" and "Oh that we two were May-ing" have rung round the world ever since. A song and a duet sung nigh forty years ago and still a-singing, despite all the greater vibrations since stirred in the air about us by the magicians of sound!

To see life steadily and whole may be the

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ambition of wisdom, but for happiness it is enough that the eyes should note some of the changing lights, the ears catch some of the sweet sounds, even though broken like evening bells against a sunset breeze. As it is for little boys and girls, so may it be for the grown men and women. Johnny's writing-case and Aladdin's jewels may perhaps lose some of their power to thrill, even chocolate and dripping cakes may in time seem less important than they were. But other things will come to take their places and sweeten life. To every age belong little joys which remain in memory after many of the greater experiences have gone over into the mists of oblivion.

So may it be for them. And especially may they know what it is to remember a day, not because trains were late, tax-collectors pressing, fellow citizens exacting or obtuse, not because a head ached, or a temper suffered, not because life seemed a carefully arranged assembly of worries—but because

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after tea a Poggin held one hand, a Penelope held the other, a Guy hurried on before, turning an eager face as he began, "Did you *know* . . .," and everybody went forth to greet and welcome the new little pig.



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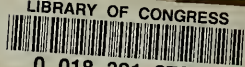
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